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Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

First performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the first performance report of the Secretary-General on the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (A/71/576). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 8 December 2016.

2. The first performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 reflects adjustments required because of variations in the rates of inflation and currency exchange and in the standards assumed in the calculation of the initial appropriations. The report also takes into account the additional mandates that the General Assembly and the Security Council have approved since the appropriation of the programme budget, as well as unforeseen and extraordinary items that could not be deferred to the second year of the biennium.

3. In his report, the Secretary-General points out that the primary purpose of the first performance report is to identify revised estimates required because of variations in the rates of inflation and exchange and in standards since the calculation of the initial appropriations. This is in conformity with the requirements of General Assembly resolution 32/211 (A/71/576, para. 1). The Advisory Committee was informed that the report of the Secretary-General is in full compliance with those requirements and that all the required changes to the costing parameters have been included therein.

4. The revised requirements under the expenditure sections amount to $5,460.7 million, an increase of $51.9 million, or 1.0 per cent, over the appropriation level of $5,408.7 million approved by the General Assembly in its resolutions 70/248 B and C

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and 70/249 A-C. Table 2 of the report of the Secretary-General provides details on the determining factors that lead to the increase under the expenditure sections.

5. A summary of revised estimates for the income sections for the biennium is presented in table 1.B of the report of the Secretary-General. The revised estimates amount to $533.1 million, which is an increase of $1.2 million, or 0.2 per cent, over the initial estimate for the biennium 2016-2017 of $531.9 million (see also paras. 20-24 below).

6. The Advisory Committee notes that the programme budget appropriation comprises $5,401.8 million from the initial appropriation as well as an additional appropriation totalling $6.9 million approved by the General Assembly during its resumed seventieth session. This includes revised estimates in respect of the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism and the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

7. The report of the Secretary-General indicates that revised estimates and statements of programme budget implications in response to several draft resolutions under consideration by the Main Committees of the General Assembly at the time of the finalization of the first performance report amount to approximately $145.2 million. These amounts are being handled outside the context of the first performance report and include, inter alia, increases relating to the proposed revised estimates in respect of special political missions ($60.6 million), estimates in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development ($24.5 million) and a request for a subvention to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia ($16.2 million) (A/71/576, para. 6). The observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee are contained in its respective reports on these subjects (A/71/595, A/71/632 and A/71/550). The Committee notes that the amounts exclude the requirements for the United Nations Mission in Colombia ($64.1 million) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism ($3.3 million), as well as certain statements of programme budget implications that had not been finalized at the time of the issuance of the first performance report.

Unforeseen and extraordinary expenses

8. The report of the Secretary-General details the unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 2016-2017 totalling $8.15 million incurred under the terms of General Assembly resolution 70/250. Table 3 provides a list of the commitments approved by the Advisory Committee ($5.48 million) (table 3.A), commitments approved by the Secretary-General relating to the maintenance of peace and security and for security measures, pursuant to the authority granted under paragraphs 1 (a) and 1 (c) of Assembly resolution 70/250 ($2.62 million) (table 3.B) and commitments approved by the President of the International Court of Justice ($50,000) (table 3.C).

9. Concerning the commitments approved by the Advisory Committee, upon request, the Committee was provided with a breakdown of all the commitments it had approved and the related sections of the programme budget, as well as the commitments recently submitted to it for approval, which are set out below:

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Section 2. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management	
Preventing the deterioration of the human rights situation in Burundi	155.20
Situation of human rights in South Sudan	72.40
The human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic	349.00
Section 24. Human rights	
Preventing the deterioration of the human rights situation in Burundi	636.10
Situation of human rights in South Sudan	431.30
The human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic	3 550.20
Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	276.10
Section 29F. Administration, Geneva	
Situation of human rights in South Sudan	12.20
Subtotal[a]	**5 482.50**
Section 3. Political affairs	
United Nations Mission in Colombia	8 500.00
United Nations Mission in Colombia: additional requirements[b]	5 137.00
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria: additional requirements	4 693.20
United Nations Support Mission in Libya: additional requirements	4 991.20
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen: additional requirements	1 186.30
Subtotal	**24 507.70**
Total	**29 990.20**

[a] The amounts take into account actual expenditure experience and are therefore lower than the total amount approved by the Advisory Committee.

[b] New commitment authority currently under review by the Advisory Committee (as of 2 December 2016).

The amounts include commitments of $24.5 million approved by the Committee or under consideration by the Committee which are being sought for appropriation in the context of the overall requirements for special political missions contained in the related report of the Secretary-General (A/71/365).

10. Concerning the $2.62 million[1] approved under the authority of the Secretary-General set out in table 3.B of the report, the Advisory Committee recalls that, pursuant to paragraphs 1 (a) and 3 (c) of General Assembly resolution 70/250, the Secretary-General has the authority to enter into commitments in the biennium 2016-2017 to meet unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for: (a) such

[1] The $2.62 million does not include commitments of $990,200 approved by the Secretary-General in respect of the start-up of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, which are sought in the context of the overall requirements for special political missions.

commitments not exceeding a total of $8 million in any one year of the biennium as relating to the maintenance of peace and security; and (b) such commitments not exceeding a total of $1 million as required for security measures. During its review of the report of the Secretary-General, the Committee sought background information on the commitments approved under this authority and was provided with related detail, which is contained in the annex to the present report.

11. Included in these commitments approved by the Secretary-General is an amount of $725,600 in respect of security requirements for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which is to be charged against section 34 of the programme budget, Safety and security. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the commitment was provided to cover the cost of personal protection measures for the current High Commissioner.

Variations in budgetary assumptions for the biennium 2016-2017

12. The variations in the budgetary assumptions for the 2016-2017 biennium contained in the report of the Secretary-General include: (a) net increases as a result of exchange rate fluctuations ($47.7 million); (b) decreases due to adjustments in inflation rates ($12.85 million); (c) increases in standard staff costs ($30.3 million); and (d) decreases due to the differences between actual and budgeted vacancy rates ($34.1 million) (A/71/576, paras. 19-43).

13. Concerning the changes in foreign currency rates, the Secretary-General indicates that the $47.7 million net increase comprises $59.6 million relating to the difference in the exchange rates approved in the initial budget appropriation and the updated rates presented in the current report, offset in part by an amount of $11.96 million relating to gains from forward purchasing of Swiss francs and euros. In particular, the increase reflects the general depreciation of the United States dollar in a number of operational rates experienced from January to October 2016 compared with the rates foreseen at the time of the initial appropriation (A/71/576, para. 21). Fluctuations in a number of other currencies are also described in the report (ibid., paras. 19-26). With regard to inflation, the report provides further details on post and non-post elements that led to decreased requirements of $12.85 million (ibid., paras. 33-38).

14. On the matter of currency exchange rate movements, the report states that the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/246, authorized the Secretary-General to utilize forward purchasing to protect the United Nations against exchange rate fluctuations. The forward purchasing of foreign currency is a financial instrument that provides additional certainty to entities that enter into this type of contract, as it predefines the price of foreign currency to be purchased in the future. The price is based on the spot rate of exchange applicable at the time of the agreement and is subsequently adjusted on the basis of the applicable interest rates.

15. The Secretary-General provides details on the experience of this forward purchasing for the current biennium in his report (A/71/576, paras. 27-32). It is indicated that under the forward purchasing contract for 2016, the United Nations purchased 300 million Swiss francs and 48 million euros at a predefined rate of exchange which, with the weakening of the United States dollar against these currencies, resulted in a net positive difference between the contracted forward rates and the United Nations operational rates of exchange, which would have been used

in the absence of the forward contract. For 2017, the United Nations entered into a forward contract in October 2016 to purchase the same amounts of Swiss francs and euros at predefined rates. The Secretary-General indicates that the practice has provided more certainty and, in view of exchange rate movements since the introduction of this practice, resulted in a net positive difference of $4.6 million in 2013 when it was first undertaken, $7.1 million in the biennium 2014-2015 and $11.9 million for the period from January to October 2016, thereby reducing the budgetary requirements for the respective budgetary periods. According to the Secretary-General, it is expected that the positive and negative differences will offset each other and that, over the long term, the amounts paid for foreign currency will be similar, whether the entity uses forward contracts or the spot rate.

16. As to the timing of the forward contracts, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that, for 2016, the contracts were put in place in December 2015 at the time when the General Assembly was considering the biennial report of the Secretary-General on the effect of rates and inflation. However, for 2017, forward contracts were undertaken in mid-October 2016 so as to enable continued application of forward rates in the first performance report. In view of the considerable volatility in exchange rates in the final months of 2016, the Committee requested that a hypothetical calculation be made to determine the overall financial impact if forward contracts had been finalized in December 2016. The details of this simulation could not, however, be completed by the time of the finalization of the present report. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide to the General Assembly the results of the simulation exercise to reflect the impact of entering into forward contracts in December rather than October 2016 at the time of its consideration of the first performance report. The Committee is of the view that it may be beneficial for the Secretary-General to establish clear criteria and procedures for the determination of the most appropriate date to enter into forward contracts in order to mitigate budgetary uncertainty with respect to exchange rate movements.**

17. As indicated in paragraphs 39 to 41 of the report of the Secretary-General, adjustments to standard costs reflecting the net effect of changes in standard salary costs, common staff costs and staff assessment rates amount to an increase of $30.3 million. This includes revisions to standard salary costs for 2016, which are based on the actual average payroll experience at each duty station. A net increase of $22.3 million reflects average net base salary costs that are higher than had been projected in the initial appropriation. Also included are adjustments to common staff costs, which show a net increase of $5.7 million, based on actual experience during the biennium 2014-2015 and for the period from January to September 2016, as compared with the amounts foreseen in the initial appropriation.

18. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the increase in standard costs represented an equivalent of 1 per cent of the overall appropriation for net salary costs. The amount reflects $2.3 million under the Professional and higher categories and $12.3 million under the General Service and related categories, both broadly attributable to step increases and an increased percentage in the number of dependent staff. Increases in common staff costs reflected increases in medical insurance costs due to higher monthly premium rates and changes in staff composition. This increase was partly offset by a reduction in appointment and

transfer costs mainly related to reduced travel costs and a reduction in separation costs attributed to lower indemnity payments and travel costs.

19. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/71/576, paras. 42 and 43), the General Assembly decided that vacancy rates of 9.0 per cent for Professional and 6.0 per cent for General Service posts for continuing posts, and a vacancy rate of 50.0 per cent for new posts for both categories, should be used as a basis for calculation of the budget for the biennium 2016-2017. The Secretary-General also indicated that the average realized vacancy rates from January to September 2016 were 10.1 for Professional posts and 7.1 per cent for General Service posts.

Revised estimates for 2016-2017

20. As previously indicated, the report of the Secretary-General sets out revised requirements under the expenditure sections amounting to $5,460.7 million for the biennium 2016-2017. With respect to income estimates, in his report, the Secretary-General outlines the revised income estimates for the biennium amounting to $533.1 million, an increase of $ 1.2 million, or 0.2 per cent, comprising: (a) an increase of $6.9 million under income section 1, Income from staff assessment; (b) an increase of $415,600 under income section 2, General income, largely reflecting an increase in income from rental of premises; and (c) a decrease of $6.2 million under income section 3, Services to the public (A/71/576, paras. 45-49).

21. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with a breakdown of the general income reported under income section 2, which showed that income estimates relating to the reimbursement for services have been revised downward to $826,000 from the original estimate of $1.5 million, representing a reduction of 45 per cent.

22. Regarding the decrease in income arising from income section 3, Services to the public, resulting from the downward revision in the estimated revenues, the report of the Secretary-General indicates that this is primarily attributable to lower than anticipated revenues from sale of philatelic items and print publications and from guided tours at Headquarters, and a temporary suspension of royalty payments from the vendor for Headquarters catering operations. In this connection, the Advisory Committee sought additional information relating to the downward revision of these income estimates.

23. As regards income from guided tours at Headquarters, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that despite an increase in over 40,000 visitors taking the United Nations tour through 2016, as compared to the same period in 2015, reduced revenues may be attributable to tightened security restrictions, delays in recruiting new staff and the high turnover of public information assistants. With regard to the revenue estimates relating to the United Nations Postal Administration, the Committee was informed that estimates had been consistently revised downward based on sales trends and the declining and ageing market for philatelic products. The Committee was also informed that measures were being taken to reduce operating costs and to re-size the structure of the Postal Administration. **The Advisory Committee notes the intention of the Secretary-General to take steps to contain expenditures and improve efficiency. In this connection, the Committee reiterates its previous suggestion that a review of**

the potential of the United Nations Postal Administration to generate revenue may be useful (see A/68/7, para. IS3.3, and A/70/7, para. IS3.5).

24. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its concern that the income estimates in connection with income section 3 have required downward revision over the past four bienniums. The Committee intends to keep this matter under review in the context of its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.**

25. The action to be taken by the General Assembly is set out in paragraph 50 of the report of the Secretary-General. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the revised estimates contained in the report of the Secretary-General, subject to such adjustments as may be necessary as a result of the Assembly's consideration of matters now before it, including the consolidated statement of revised estimates and programme budget implications.**

Annex

Background information on commitments approved under the terms of paragraphs 1 (a) and 1 (c) of General Assembly resolution 70/250

Delegate of the Secretary-General to the Colombian Peace Process: $481,300

In furtherance of the implementation of Security Council resolution 2261 (2016) concerning the Colombian peace process, the amount of $481,300 was approved to cover the activities of the delegate of the Secretary-General to the Colombian peace process for the period from 1 January to 12 May 2016. The resources provide for four temporary positions (1 USG, 2 P-5, 1 General Service) and other operational costs.

Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture: $170,900

The amount of $170,900 covers the resources required to support the extension of the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture until the end of March 2016. The resources provide for two positions (1 P-5 and 1 P-3) and other operational costs.

Senior adviser for Asia and the Pacific: $93,000

The amount of $93,000 covers the travel and other operational costs of the senior adviser for Asia and the Pacific to facilitate efforts to de-escalate the ongoing political crisis in the Maldives.

Study on youth, peace and security: $409,600

The amount of $409,600 covers some of the requirements for the study on youth, peace and security mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2250 (2015), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the positive contribution of youth to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels, and to make the results of the study available to the Security Council and all States Members of the United Nations. Extrabudgetary contributions are also expected to cover the majority of the costs for the study. The resources provide for one General Service (Other level) position for the period of 4 months from 1 September to 31 December 2016 and other operational costs.

Syrian Arab Republic board of inquiry: $739,300

The amount of $739,300 covers the activities of the Syrian Arab Republic board of inquiry for a period of two months, from 12 October to 11 December 2016. The resources provide for four positions (1 USG, 1 ASG, 2 D-1) and other operational costs.

United Nations Mission in Colombia: $990,200

In addition to the commitment authorities reported above in the first performance report, a commitment authority of $990,200 was approved by the

Secretary-General to cover requirements related to the start-up of the new United Nations Mission in Colombia, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2261 (2016). This commitment authority is not included in table 3.B of the report of the Secretary-General as it is sought in the context of the overall requirements for special political missions for appropriation under the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political mission, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (see A/71/365 and Add.7). The resources provide for 15 positions (1 USG, 1 D-2, 2 D-1, 4 P-5, 3 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 General Service (Other level), 1 Field Service) as well as other operational costs.

Security for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: $725,600

The above requirements are requested for the security of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Procurement activities in the United Nations Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/273, the Secretary-General has prepared the present report, in which he advises the Assembly on the impact of Umoja on the procurement process, provides information on the advantages and disadvantages of different solicitation methodologies in the procurement of aviation services, submits an assessment of the pilot project for electronic tendering, provides an update on the development of the Award Review Board and the Vendor Review Committee, reports on intensified efforts to promote procurement from developing countries and countries with economies in transition and provides an update on the functions of the Regional Procurement Office. In addition, pursuant to the request by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions expressed in its report (A/69/809), the Secretary-General has included information on progress on refining the understanding of the concept of environmentally friendly and sustainable procurement and how it can be applied in practical terms to the United Nations.

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I. Introduction

1. The Procurement Division in the Office of Central Support Services of the Secretariat is the largest and most experienced procurement organization in the United Nations system and, beyond its critical support role for the acquisition of goods and services at Headquarters, needs to have its role strengthened as a strategic partner of the supply chain for peacekeeping and special political missions, offices away from Headquarters, tribunals and regional commissions. The modernized approach to procurement entails strategic interaction and cooperation across departments, locations, operational mandates and budget cycles. Given its experience and leading role, the Division provides support to procurement operations worldwide, provides guidance and oversight to various procurement offices and delivers training to an extensive community of United Nations procurement officials.

2. The 2014 and 2015 annual statistical reports on United Nations procurement, produced by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), illustrate a continuing increase in the total procurement of goods and services in support of mandates of the United Nations system. In 2014, the overall procurement volume increased to $17.2 billion from $16.1 billion in 2013, and it increased further, to $17.6 billion, in 2015. Similarly, with a share of approximately 18-19 per cent of the total United Nations system, the procurement volume of the Division shifted from just under $3.0 billion in 2013 to $3.2 billion in 2014 and $3.1 billion in 2015. An analysis of the major commodities shows that air transportation services, fuel, petroleum products and food rations in support of field missions were the highest value acquisitions in 2014 and 2015.

3. Multifaceted and innovative procurement tools, regional capacity and dedicated client support characterized recent service provision and will figure prominently in the future. The implementation of Umoja, the enterprise resource planning system, removes location-based operational barriers, allows for harmonized processes and enables reporting and real-time management of procurement activities regardless of location. The strategic direction of procurement in the Secretariat will be aligned with the objectives of the global service delivery model, thereby leading to a strong procurement organization and, as a result, the potential for optimized benefits in the context of Umoja and beyond.

II. Towards a global Secretariat procurement system

A. Governance of United Nations procurement

1. Provision of effective and efficient acquisition services at Headquarters and in hubs and field offices

4. Following the implementation of Umoja, the Secretariat, noting such other initiatives as the global field support strategy, the supply chain management strategy and actions resulting from the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, is now strategically positioned to re-examine its procurement operations. Against this background, the Office of Central Support Services, in alignment with the objective of the global service delivery model to provide more

cost-effective services to clients, is reviewing, in close consultation with clients and stakeholders, adjustments to the governance framework, organizational structure and distribution of procurement offices worldwide, with a focus on client orientation and efficiency gains.

Regional procurement in the context of service delivery

5. Previous reports of the Secretary-General, most recently, A/69/710, outlined the governance, structure and key activities of the Regional Procurement Office in Entebbe, Uganda. The General Assembly's decision, in its resolution 69/273, to establish the Office as a regular office within the Procurement Division of the Secretariat will enable the Secretariat to continue to benefit from a regional procurement office and encourages the Secretariat to develop further options to maximize effective and efficient service provision with a robust regional component.

6. Recent data studies undertaken by the Division have shown that the vast majority of Secretariat procurement expenditure is generated through contracts (global and regional systems contracts as well as regular contracts) established by the Procurement Division and the Regional Procurement Office (77 per cent of total expenditure in 2015). Procurement staff located in field missions conduct primarily transactional procurement functions and relatively low-value local procurement (15 per cent of total expenditure, with the remaining 8 per cent stemming from offices away from Headquarters, tribunals and regional commissions). At the same time, the majority of procurement staff (57 per cent) are currently located in and attached to field missions. Of the remainder, 24 per cent are in the Procurement Division and 19 per cent are in offices away from Headquarters, tribunals and regional commissions. This indicates an imbalance of resources leading to inefficiencies and the need to consider structural changes. In addition to the ongoing periodic analysis of the current functions and regional role of the Regional Procurement Office, the Office of Central Support Services, in consultation with stakeholders, is looking into enhanced measures, including but not limited to structural composition, in order to further streamline procurement services rendered by the Regional Procurement Office in central and eastern Africa.

7. A United Nations procurement organization with hubs that are not strictly location-bound performing procurement functions for the relevant missions, along with a realignment of resources to match workloads, would better serve the Organization's interests. A phased approach towards this goal is recommended, to develop a proposal for the consolidation of local offices within the framework of the global service delivery model. One step in this direction, and an early indicator of consolidation potential, is the example of governance adjustments for procurement activities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, as described below.

Offices away from Headquarters forming part of a global procurement system

8. Given the audit recommendations outlined in the 2012 report of the Board of Auditors (A/67/5, Vol. I), and with the introduction of Umoja in 2015 allowing further harmonization of procurement processes, it was decided to channel all procurement and financial transactions of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

(UN-Habitat) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs through Umoja. This meant that those programmes needed to be aligned with the procurement processes and procedures of the Secretariat.

9. Following a number of audit recommendations, and significant consultation and negotiation, the Under-Secretaries-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, UNEP and UN-Habitat agreed on the way forward proposed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services. Service-level agreements were signed with UNEP and UN-Habitat in November 2014 and March 2015. The Division also established standard operating procedures and allocated required resources to provide timely guidance and support to each entity.

10. The global procurement system project allows for greater visibility of procurement action, including by taking a more strategic view of all procurement undertaken by the Secretariat. Because of the diverse nature of their operations, the above-mentioned programmes will benefit from access to the Division's contracts with clients in the United Nations system and to local contracts from the peacekeeping missions and offices away from Headquarters. Furthermore, the project is being used to pilot an approach to providing procurement support to the programmes that leverages Umoja and makes use of the capacity of the Secretariat's procurement offices at the locations where the goods and services are required. In undertaking this process, it is expected that the lead time for procurement in many instances will decrease as the agencies utilize the existing contractual network used by the Division, the offices away from Headquarters and the missions. In order to ensure that minor procurement activities could be performed at the local level without having to refer to Headquarters, limited delegation of authority was also given to some offices of UNEP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UN-Habitat. Such delegation was contingent on staff completing the mandatory procurement training, which is in line with the same principles applied at Headquarters.

11. A meeting of the Nairobi Services Board was held in January 2016, at which progress was discussed, including in the area of procurement. The various agencies involved confirmed that the new arrangement generally worked well in the area of sourcing to acquire goods and services. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, on behalf of the Board, commended the successful implementation of the procurement model and recommended that the arrangements put in place with respect to the Office be replicated elsewhere to establish a consistent global procurement model at all offices away from Headquarters.

Procurement services under the "One United Nations" initiative

12. In order to optimize service delivery, client orientation and efficiency in the provision of procurement services, the Secretariat foresees the provision of more consolidated support to field missions, offices away from Headquarters, tribunals and regional commissions as an eventual scenario. The explanations provided above illustrate the need to review the governance structure, and the Office of Central Support Services has begun the consultation process accordingly.

2. Alignment of procurement authorities and accountability standards

13. The delegation of procurement authority plays an instrumental role in establishing the levels of authority and accountability for the respective offices and officials of the Secretariat. As a consequence of the roll-out of Umoja, the Secretariat has adopted a more integrated governance framework and process for the management of procurement and has accordingly revised the delegation structure. As a result, on an interim basis, the Chief Procurement Officer for the United Nations Office at Nairobi reports to the Procurement Division on procurement matters. Procurement cases originating from UN-Habitat and UNEP are managed by buyer-supervisors in Nairobi and New York, pursuant to the service-level agreements executed by the United Nations Office at Nairobi, UN-Habitat and UNEP.

14. Consistent with that approach and reflecting the greater transparency and reduced risk resulting from the implementation of Umoja, thresholds were increased effective June 2015. The threshold for the Director of the Procurement Division has been increased to $1 million, and thresholds for other Division officials (P-4 to D-1) increased accordingly. All cases above $1 million are decided by the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services following review by the Headquarters Committee on Contracts, except in the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna where, pending alignment with the new Nairobi model, the threshold currently remains at $5 million. As an example of the efficiencies this has generated, the change in the procurement thresholds for the Chief Procurement Officer in Nairobi and the buyer-supervisors has resulted in immediate efficiency gains, in terms of timeliness to fulfil clients' needs, as prior to Umoja, all cases for the United Nations Office at Nairobi, UNEP and UN-Habitat valued at $200,000 were subject to vetting by the local committee on contracts.

3. Cooperation with other United Nations organizations

15. The General Assembly had previously encouraged the Secretary-General to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities. The Procurement Division has been part of various initiatives that exemplify the Secretariat's collaboration with other United Nations entities.

Joint vehicle procurement

16. As recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit in paragraph 246 of its note on procurement reforms in the United Nations system (JIU/NOTE/2011/1), the High-level Committee on Management Procurement Network initiated a project to explore the opportunities of collaborative procurement of vehicles on behalf of various United Nations organizations. As an illustrative example of joint procurement efforts, in the period 2014-2015, the Division led an international competitive tender to provide for all passenger vehicle categories (four-wheel-drive station wagons, sedans, minibuses, buses and pickup trucks), defined by a joint technical team in support of all United Nations missions and entities worldwide, based on common vehicle requirements and the consolidation of estimated procurement volumes. The project continues to be coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme, with the support of an external consultant providing overall project management assistance. The resulting contracts include

full after-sale support to the United Nations fleet for the entire life cycle of the vehicles. A contract for some of the four-wheel-drive station wagons, minibuses and buses was signed in 2015. The tender issued in October 2016 includes passenger vehicle categories for which requirements have changed, as a result of lessons learned during the first joint tender, and a new crossover utility vehicle category to complete the range of vehicles available to support the whole United Nations system.

World Food Programme joint shipping cell

17. To improve supply chain synergies on a global level, in 2013, the Secretariat entered into a framework agreement with the World Food Programme (WFP). The agreement served as a statement of intent to jointly identify and pursue initiatives that result in a more effective, efficient and coherent approach to supply chain operations. In 2015, an opportunity was identified to develop a joint shipping cell between the Secretariat and WFP.

18. The joint shipping cell is expected to jointly contract ocean freight services for the movement of goods from commodity vendors at the ports of exit to the field, with the aim being efficiency gains and the possible reduction of costs and contracting time. The project will provide an opportunity to reduce costs through the consolidation of goods for the United Nations field missions, combined with the WFP shipping volume, which will result in better leveraging of freight and chartering rates. As a pilot project, the joint shipping cell is to focus on one seaport of debarkation, Mombasa, Kenya, for the East Africa corridor, for select commodities and field missions.

19. By the end of the pilot project, in 2017, the Secretariat and WFP are expected to complete the testing of revised shipping modalities for United Nations-owned equipment and analyse the cost benefits of joint shipping contracts. The gain in visibility of shipments will have been measured, and the modalities for reception and best modes of operation in discharge ports will have been tested and identified. The lessons of the pilot project will inform a decision on whether or not to continue with the joint shipping cell and, if so, whether to expand it beyond its initial limited scope.

United Nations Office for Project Services

20. In August 2014, the Secretariat and UNOPS signed a memorandum of understanding, replacing an earlier one, for cases in which the Secretariat may require UNOPS to provide project implementation support services. The new memorandum of understanding defines more clearly the roles and responsibilities for cooperation between the two entities. Based on advice from the Office of Legal Affairs, engagement with UNOPS for project support, for the purpose of implementing Secretariat programmes and activities, is now being taken forward, in accordance with financial regulation 5.1 and financial rule 105.3, under the authority of the Controller and no longer in accordance with the financial rules for procurement, namely, under the authority of the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services, unless specific circumstances so warrant. In November 2014, the Controller issued supplementary guidance, as contemplated in the memorandum of understanding with UNOPS, and agreed to consult with the

Assistant Secretary-General on all financial agreements in which the monetary value exceeded the amount of $3 million.

4. Oversight and compliance: training and professionalization of the procurement function

Compliance monitoring programme

21. The Division's compliance monitoring programme continued to promote adherence, at Headquarters and in the field missions, to the United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules and the United Nations Procurement Manual. The success of the Division's compliance monitoring programme in the missions was formally acknowledged by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in its report dated 7 February 2013, in which it recommended that the programme be expanded to include offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and tribunals.

Award Review Board

22. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/273, welcomed the continuation of the independent procurement challenge system, the Award Review Board, and its phased expansion. It requested the Secretary-General to provide, in his next report, an update on the development of the Board, including the feasibility of lowering the financial threshold for vendors to submit a procurement challenge.

23. From October 2014 to May 2016, the Procurement Division at Headquarters and at the Regional Procurement Office issued 769 solicitations. During this period, 19 procurement challenges were received by the Registrar of the Award Review Board. Of that number, 11 challenges were not accepted because they did not meet the criteria established for review. Of the remaining eight challenges received, six were reviewed by Board experts and two were withdrawn by the vendors. The Under-Secretary-General for Management accepted the Board experts' recommendations to deny the challenges in five of the six cases. In the sixth case reviewed, the expert recommended that one aspect of the challenge be denied but a second aspect sustained, while offering no remedy to the vendor. The Under-Secretary-General for Management did not approve the recommendation to sustain the challenge but decided to shorten the duration of the contract that had been awarded.

24. The Award Review Board was established to review whether vendors' submissions were treated correctly and evaluated fairly, yet a number of procurement challenges have focused on issues beyond this scope.

25. Expansion of the coverage of the Award Review Board to include offices away from Headquarters (Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi) has been initiated for solicitations issued since 1 January 2016. As at the time of writing, no challenges had been received on solicitations originating in offices away from Headquarters. It was therefore too early to evaluate the impact of the first phase of expansion. In anticipation of the expansion, however, the Procurement Division developed training materials aimed at increasing the capacity of procurement staff who debrief vendors in order to ensure that vendors' questions and concerns are appropriately addressed at an early stage. It is important that consideration of any further

expansion of the Board be undertaken only after the debriefing process has been fully developed in those locations. It is also intended that any further expansion be preceded by a review of the terms of reference of the Board in the light of experience gained to date.

26. In 2014, the threshold for Award Review Board eligibility was lowered to include contracts exceeding $200,000 in value. At the time of writing, all the cases reviewed by independent experts had involved contracts of large value, in excess of $1.6 million. The Award Review Board involves a formal process that engages independent experts who receive compensation for their work. With respect to the feasibility of further lowering the financial threshold for vendors to submit a procurement challenge, the efficient use of resources suggests that experts should be engaged only to review challenges of high-value contract awards.

Professionalization of the Procurement Practice Group

27. The Procurement Division continues to offer courses to procurement, requisitioning and contract management offices at the basic and intermediate levels in its online Procurement Training Campus. Certification at the basic level is mandatory for procurement staff throughout the offices of the Secretariat; these courses are also open to all staff members of the United Nations and United Nations-affiliated organizations. Since 2014, intermediate-level courses have been offered in various areas, including acquisition planning, contractual issues in purchasing and contract management.

28. Since 2007, the Division has provided basic-level face-to-face training to 1,360 staff members at Headquarters and in external offices. As at November 2016, 7,698 certificates had been issued through the Procurement Training Campus to staff members of the United Nations common system, as follows: 723 to staff members from Headquarters, 414 to staff members from offices away from Headquarters, 5,234 to staff members from the peacekeeping and special political missions and 1,327 to staff members from other offices, agencies and programmes.

29. In furtherance of its objective of professionalizing procurement practitioners, the Procurement Division, subject to adequate funding, continues to enrol staff members from Headquarters and the missions in external training courses leading to professional accreditation by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply, an internationally recognized procurement training institution. In addition, the Division continues to provide staff with opportunities to enhance their professional competence in specialized areas.

30. In the context of the professionalization of the Procurement Practice Group, the recommendation of the Board of Auditors that the Administration continue its efforts to develop a career path for procurement professionals (A/70/5 (Vol. I), chap. II, para. 142) and the creation of an integrated supply chain system with the deployment of Umoja and other initiatives following the implementation of the global field support strategy, the Office of Central Support Services has been discussing the young professionals programme with the Office of Human Resources Management to ensure that the Organization recruits, at the P-1 and P-2 levels, the talented and highly qualified professionals that are needed in procurement, logistics, supply chain management, contract management and other related administrative and mission support functions. Specifically, the Division is consulting with the

Office of Human Resources Management on the inclusion of procurement in the design of the young professionals programme for administration, planned for the period 2017-2018.

B. Information systems and business intelligence

1. Implementation of Umoja and its impact on procurement

31. The deployment of the Umoja system at Headquarters, as part of the cluster 4 migration, has eliminated the need to manage and maintain two separate systems, namely, Umoja and the legacy systems. The implementation related to the procure-to-pay process, covering the full range of transactions from ordering to payment, was a significant milestone. Under Umoja, the Division has now migrated to a single vendor database for the entire Secretariat, harmonized contract documentation (purchase orders and solicitation documents) in a single form used in all locations and created a truly global system that allows for a consistent workflow regardless of location or organizational unit.

32. A global commercial supplier database, combined with rigorous codification of the types of goods and services procured by the Organization, reinforces the holistic visibility of business relationships and improves opportunities for negotiating more favourable terms. Furthermore, the procure-to-pay process has the potential to yield discounts from vendors, such as prompt payment discounts. In many cases, such provisions have already been included in contractual agreements. With the current increased ability to monitor the verification of goods and services, the certification of invoices and the status of payments, the Organization will be able to redouble its efforts to further negotiate with vendors the best terms and conditions for payment.

33. The focus of the Division over the next year will be to analyse the operations of various procurement units that are now using Umoja, in order to ensure that buying power is maximized, and to analyse any technical, operational and structural barriers to efficiency that exist within current operations. This effort is key to the realization of benefits from Umoja and will allow the Division to consider enhancements that will increase efficiency and make reporting more transparent.

34. Since providing information on the new reporting and analysis capabilities in the previous procurement report (see A/69/710, paras. 34 and 35), the Procurement Division, in collaboration with stakeholders such as Umoja teams, requisitioning offices and field procurement personnel, has put considerable effort into providing tangible benefits resulting from the availability of Umoja enterprise data in the form of reports that can be configured and executed, with minimum effort, directly by non-technical end users. The following reports have already been made available at the time of writing: contract utilization, outstanding deliveries, pending shopping carts and vendor solicitation activity.

35. The Division, furthermore, acts as a critical supply chain focal point in several Secretariat initiatives initiated in 2015 and 2016. Functional requirement documents have been developed as inputs for the Umoja project team, outlining business needs in the following areas: source-to-acquire performance measurements, shopping cart life cycle, vendors' commodity group share and price trend analysis. The Division

has provided support to the Umoja project team in terms of assistance and guidance with the development of a new semantic layer that will improve reporting by providing a business representation layer using business terminology on top of the enterprise data. The Division remains committed to the goal of providing cross-cutting and Organization-wide data analytics capability so as to ensure the delivery of intuitive, cross-functional and efficient reporting that meets the needs of the Umoja user community at large.

36. Umoja also introduced the capacity to enhance the visibility of information on vendors awarded contracts and purchase orders. At the time of writing, the Division was publishing on its website all Headquarters and peacekeeping awards over $40,000. Work was ongoing to expand this to include awards by offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and tribunals.

2. Electronic tendering

37. The Procurement Division initiated an e-tendering pilot project in 2014. The e-tendering solution allows for certain elements of the solicitation exercise to be processed electronically. These include the delivery of tender documents to invited vendors through their United Nations Global Marketplace account, tender questions and answers along with acknowledgements, Marketplace-integrated submission of offers by suppliers and electronic opening of supplier submissions. The main objectives sought by the Division in adopting this new tender submission mechanism are efficiency gains, reduced printing and storage requirements, increased competition, "anytime, anywhere" participation in solicitations by suppliers, more time for suppliers to prepare tenders and enhanced internal controls.

38. Since March 2015, the Division's Communications and Information Technology Procurement Section has issued requests for quotations through an e-tendering solution. The United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Global Service Centre in Brindisi, Italy, joined the e-tendering pilot in May and June 2015, respectively. In January 2016, the Division's freight forwarding team joined the pilot, and all its requests for quotations are now processed through the system.

39. In order to assess the Secretariat vendor community's position on an e-tendering solution, an overall outreach effort was conducted, aimed at all registered vendors. A total of 2,164 vendors responded to the survey. The vast majority of vendors, or more than 81 per cent, expressed support, while 16 per cent expressed neutrality and less than 3 per cent expressed a negative view on e-tendering, with a preference indicated for submission by e-mail.

40. After the conclusion of each e-tendering exercise, a survey was submitted to all invited vendors. The responses received as at March 2016 depicted a generally positive reception of the e-tendering system among the vendor community. Overall, the user-friendliness of the system was confirmed by 82 per cent of the vendors ("very user-friendly" and "extremely user-friendly").

41. As at March 2016, three offices, namely, the Procurement Division, the United Nations Global Service Centre and the United Nations Office at Geneva, had processed a total of 110 e-tendering exercises, resulting in the submission of 1,617 offers by 644 distinct vendors from 63 different countries. A total of 142 distinct

vendors from 40 different developing countries or countries with economies in transition had submitted offers through the e-tendering platform, and this number was expected to increase substantially as the e-tendering pilot project is extended to other commodities and to the field missions.

42. A comparison of requests for quotations in the area of information and communications technology (ICT) processed through the new system with the 20 most recent requests for quotations conducted outside of the e-tendering platform indicates that e-tendering solicitation exercises benefit from a higher average number of both invited vendors (10.80 versus 7.55 previously) and responding vendors (3.97 versus 3.05 previously).

43. The gradual increase of the pilot project's scope has provided valuable lessons while avoiding unfavourable impacts on the vendor community. It has been determined that vendor outreach is critical before the e-tendering pilot is extended to additional procurement teams; a comprehensive information campaign has therefore been conducted and clear instructions on the use of the system provided. The campaign is continuing.

44. Further steps include a selective use of e-tendering for invitations to bid and requests for proposals and the roll-out of e-tendering to other Division teams. However, extensive testing of the system and assessments of any impacts are envisaged before such further action is taken.

3. Further enhancements in information technology support systems

45. With the objective of facilitating equitable participation in solicitation exercises by vendors worldwide and increasing competition, the Procurement Division publishes requests for expression of interest on the United Nations Global Marketplace, the Division's Internet site and mobile applications. This allows suppliers to stay informed of upcoming solicitation exercises and to express their intent to participate.

46. The publishing of requests for expression of interest is already a highly automated process managed by the Procurement Division, utilizing a minimum amount of human resources, and is used by Secretariat offices and field missions worldwide. The Division published a total of 1,143 such requests in 2014 and 1,248 in 2015.

47. While the publishing itself is highly automated, responding to a request for expression of interest is still a manual process whereby the vendor needs to fill out a response form, which is then sent in by e-mail or fax. The current approach to compiling vendor responses by the procurement officers is also a manual, time-consuming and often error-prone process.

48. In order to increase efficiency for both vendors expressing interest and procurement staff needing to compile response data, the Procurement Division has developed a feature on its Internet site and mobile applications to enable vendors to respond electronically to the requests for expression of interest of their choice using an online form. At the closing of the response window, procurement staff will be able to download a compiled list of all vendor responses through the website.

49. Given that the system development is already finalized, at the time of writing, the Procurement Division expected to launch these enhancements before the end of 2016.

4. Standards in information and communications technology procurement

50. The Office of Central Support Services continues to work with the Office of Information and Communications Technology to address issues related to the procurement of technology for the Organization. As noted in the previous report (A/69/710), the Office of Information and Communications Technology is working to create a compliance and governance framework for the use of ICT resources, and the Office of Central Support Services is working to support that effort. While this effort is ongoing, it is envisaged that the capabilities of the Umoja system will enable the Division to create a distributed function to support procurement for ICT requirements. A dedicated section within the Division, with its Chief position having recently been reclassified from a P-4 Procurement Officer to a P-5 Chief of Section (resolution 70/287), supports ICT requirements. As the new operational framework for procurement operations is defined, a dedicated group will work to ensure that procurement in the areas of technology and communications is enacted within the governance framework established by the Office of Information and Communications Technology. While this effort is ongoing, benefits are already being realized, as offices that were previously using different technology products (laptops) have been standardized to a single product through the Umoja system.

C. Sourcing from global markets

1. Global outreach activities facilitating vendor participation

51. While continuing its multifaceted supplier outreach programme, the Procurement Division has made significant efforts to facilitate equitable participation by vendors worldwide in the United Nations procurement process. Notable examples of such initiatives include the e-tendering pilot as well as the new website feature for requests for expression of interest, as described herein.

52. In addition to "live" interactive events, such as business seminars offered by the Secretariat (see table below) and "train-the-trainer" sessions for Member States and chambers of commerce, the Procurement Division actively participates in the outreach initiatives of the High-level Committee on Management Procurement Network, such as virtual business seminars that give suppliers who are unable to attend events in person access to information similar to that provided during live events.

Business seminars offered by the Secretariat

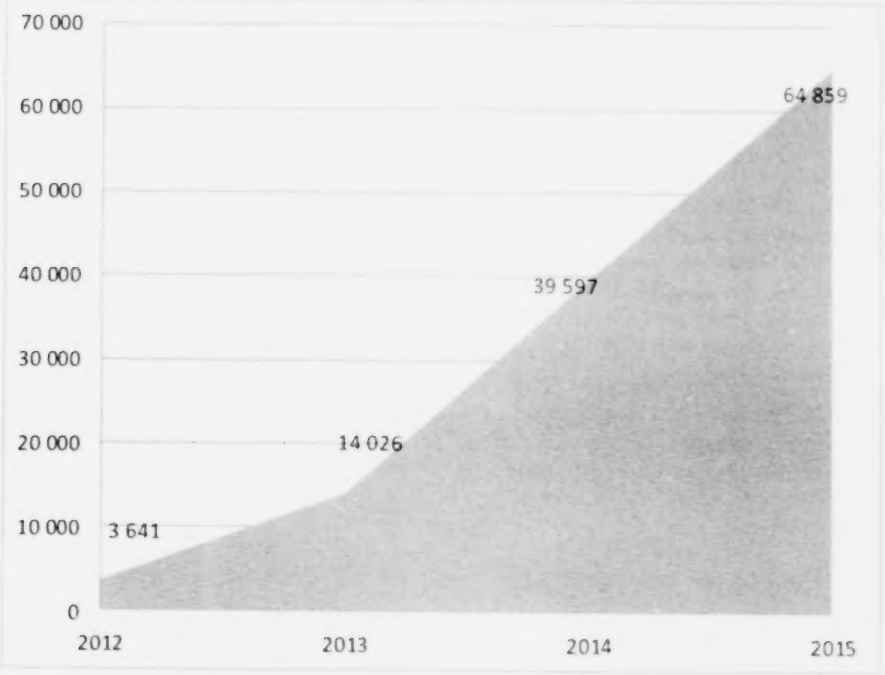
Year	*Business seminar location*	*Events*	*Vendors in attendance*	*Joint events organized with other agencies*
2014	Developing and transitioning countries	37	3 244	10
	Industrialized countries	20	1 257	12
Total, 2014		**57**	**4 501**	**22**

Year	Business seminar location	Events	Vendors in attendance	Joint events organized with other agencies
2015	Developing and transitioning countries	35	2 007	17
	Industrialized countries	19	1 043	8
Total, 2015		**54**	**3 050**	**25**

53. The United Nations Global Marketplace serves as the common vendor registration portal for all Marketplace member entities, including the Secretariat. With the intention being to increase efficiency and supplier participation in upcoming solicitation exercises, the Procurement Division has adopted a new supplier portal allowing basic-level suppliers to register with minimal effort by providing only the most essential company information, while the two additional qualification levels continue to provide for more stringent registration requirements and associated due diligence for contract award values exceeding certain thresholds (with risk mitigation based on contract value). This streamlined registration system has resulted in a considerable increase in the number of vendors registered with the Secretariat in the Marketplace (see figure I).

Figure I

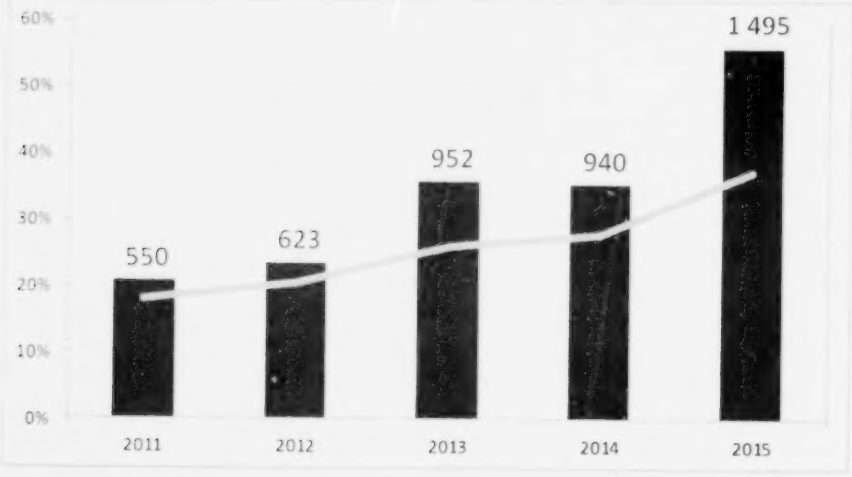
Number of Secretariat-registered vendors in the United Nations Global Marketplace as at December 31 of each year (cumulative)



2. Procurement from developing countries and countries with economies in transition

54. Ensuring access to business opportunities for vendors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition remains a high priority for the Organization. Through vendor outreach activities and the upgrading of the vendor registration portal, there has been a steady increase of vendors from non-industrialized countries participating in the solicitations issued by the Procurement Division (see figure II).

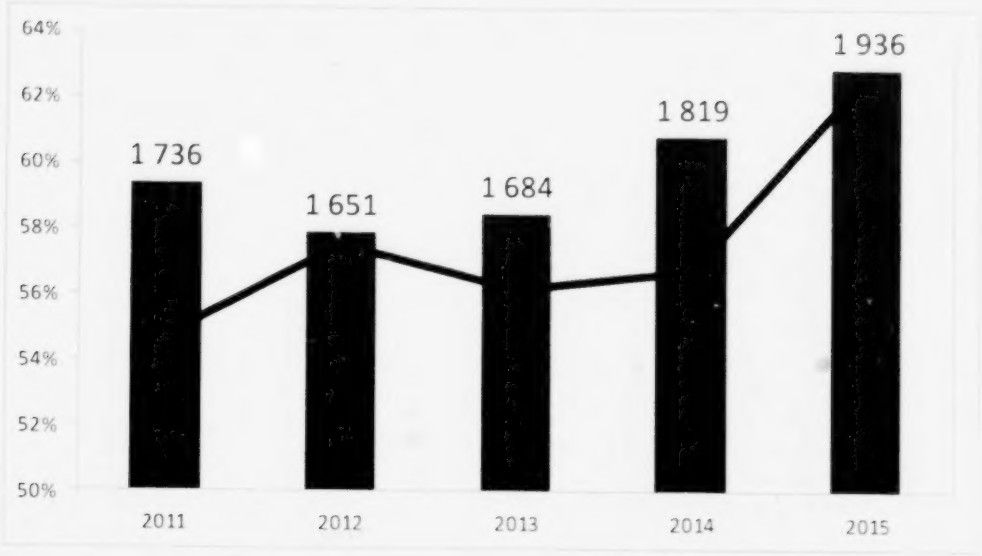
Figure II
Number of participating vendors from non-industrialized countries



55. The substantial increase since 2013 was due mainly to the introduction of basic-level registrations and to the establishment of the Regional Procurement Office, which provided on-site vendor registration support to regional vendors. The increase was also due to the incorporation of live registration sessions in business seminars, made possible by the introduction of the basic-level registrations, so that vendors can be registered during such events and immediately be able to participate in solicitations.

56. The increased participation of such vendors also resulted in an increase in business awarded to suppliers from developing countries and countries with economies in transition (see figure III).

Figure III
Total procurement from non-industrialized countries
(Millions of United States dollars)



3. Vendor Review Committee

57. The Vendor Review Committee serves as a review board for vendor roster applications that do not meet the registration criteria and for complaints from requisitioners and/or other United Nations staff against vendors alleged to have failed to perform in accordance with the terms and conditions of contracts awarded.

58. In addition, the Vendor Review Committee places special emphasis on upholding the United Nations Supplier Code of Conduct. In consultation with the Ethics Office, the Office of Legal Affairs and OIOS, the Committee examines the registration status of vendors who engage in proscribed practices, including corruption, fraud, coercion, collusion, obstruction or any other unethical practices, and makes recommendations to the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services.

59. During the five-year period from 2011 to 2015, there were 125 instances in which the Committee reviewed allegations of proscribed practices. These involved 73 vendors and resulted in a decision by the Assistant Secretary-General to suspend 20 vendors. Other recommendations made by the Committee have included censure, referring the case to the Office of Legal Affairs for contractual remedies or referring the case to OIOS for investigation. In addition, there were 68 instances in which the Committee deliberated on the reinstatement of 41 vendors.

60. As a result of the centralized vendor roster and the associated control mechanisms in place, the Vendor Review Committee experienced a sharp increase in

the number of electronic cases (special approvals) processed: 10 in 2011, 23 in 2012, 38 in 2013, 40 in 2014 and 62 in 2015.

61. Work is currently ongoing to align the Secretariat's framework for actions on vendor registration status with the model policy framework for vendor eligibility adopted by the High-level Committee on Management Procurement Network in the areas of harmonizing sanction terminology and establishing a transition policy for vendor sanctions predating the model policy framework.

4. Continuous change initiatives in procurement operations

62. In the context of sourcing from global markets and with the aim of continuously improving procurement practices to align with industry standards, the Secretariat is pursuing a number of initiatives in key areas of its operations, in line with the principles of United Nations procurement and in close collaboration with the requisitioners.

Solicitation methodologies in the procurement of long-term aviation services

63. The transition towards request for proposal-type solicitations for long-term air charter services is ongoing. Taking into account lessons learned from the pilot request for proposal exercise conducted for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the post-request for proposal aviation conference held in New York in April 2015, which was attended by more than 70 companies, two request for proposal exercises are currently being carried out, in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), and more are planned for 2017.

64. Compared with the invitation to bid methodology, the request for proposal method is aimed at providing long-term aircraft services solutions using performance-based specifications for a complete service package from the most responsive tenderer, in accordance with the "best value for money" principle, rather than by seeking a fixed number of specific air assets from the lowest-cost technically compliant bidder. The implementation of the request for proposal method fosters international competition, aligns with best practices in the aviation industry and takes into account the total cost of ownership, including fuel costs. Aviation safety aspects remain a high priority for the United Nations and are explicitly evaluated in request for proposal exercises using a points-based system. Challenges involved in the request for proposal method, as opposed to the invitation to bid method, include a more comprehensive definition of the requirements, based on logistical needs rather than predetermined types of aircraft, and a more thorough proposal evaluation process. This, in turn, requires the building of further capacity in the Department of Field Support.

65. A review of the first few months of operations under the contracts for MONUSCO resulting from the request for proposal methodology revealed that benefits are maximized when requirements are defined in a holistic manner, based on a fleet of various aircraft. Future requests for proposals will therefore aim to cover a wide scope of long-term air charter requirements for field missions, whenever possible.

After-sales support in vehicle contracts

66. The procurement of vehicles has been integrated with the after-sale support required during the entire lifetime of these assets. Accordingly, terms and conditions in systems contracts for vehicles now include such full after-sale support, and as a result, the supply chain has been streamlined. Missions, offices away from Headquarters and other entities now have access to centralized price lists in Umoja for ordering spare parts, maintenance tools, technical vehicle documentation, training and technical support directly from vehicle contractors. These price lists are routinely updated by the Division in accordance with the terms agreed in the contracts, which has eliminated the need for ad hoc requests for quotation issued before each order by each entity. This centralized system cuts down on the ordering process timeline by 90 per cent, from 20-30 days for the request for quotation process and purchase order to 2-3 days for direct issuance of the purchase order. In addition, up-to-date spare parts numbers in centralized price lists allow for more accurate and expeditious identification of the spare parts required. Moreover, missions may contact the vehicle contractors directly when in urgent need of limited quantities of spare parts, so as to identify available stock at nearby dealers, minimizing vehicle downtime.

III. Evolving business practices and developments affecting Secretariat procurement

A. Harmonization of procurement practices

67. The High-level Committee on Management Procurement Network provides a collaborative platform for procurement functions within the United Nations system and facilitates the harmonization of procurement processes based on best practices in supply chain management. From 12 to 14 April 2016, the Procurement Division hosted the nineteenth session of the High-level Committee on Management Procurement Network, at which topics including professional development and contract management, as well as the activities of the Working Group on Strategic Vendor Management, were discussed.

68. The objective of the Working Group on Strategic Vendor Management is to establish a road map for vendor management shared across the different procurement functions of the United Nations system. Since its inception in September 2014, the Working Group has promoted a common vision on strategic vendor management through partnership and collaboration, knowledge-sharing and harmonization, vendor access facilitation and technical development.

69. One current initiative of the Working Group on Strategic Vendor Management is the development of a virtual business seminar area for vendors. This space on the United Nations Global Marketplace will provide vendors with information typically disseminated at business seminars, which will be beneficial to vendors unable to attend a business seminar in person. The virtual business seminar area is intended to be a dynamic communication platform allowing individual United Nations system entities to update vendors on their procurement needs, portfolio, active tenders and procedures.

B. Major Secretariat initiatives

70. In its report (A/70/95-S/2015/446), the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations highlighted challenges in the support of United Nations peace operations and stated that four essential shifts must be embraced for real progress to be made and better results achieved: (a) politics must drive the design and implementation of peace operations; (b) the full spectrum of United Nations peace operations must be used more flexibly to respond to changing needs on the ground; (c) a stronger, more inclusive peace and security partnership is needed for the future; and (d) the Secretariat must become more field focused and peace operations more people centred.

71. The Secretary-General, in his report on the future of United Nations peace operations (A/70/357-S/2015/682), announced the development of standing administrative measures for start-up and crisis situations, which are to apply for six months on a renewable basis upon the establishment of a peace operation or confirmation of a crisis or emergency in the field. The Procurement Division has participated in working group meetings in which flexible arrangements, such as emergency delegations, cooperation with other United Nations entities and increases in monetary procurement thresholds, have been discussed. The standing administrative measures were finalized in March 2016.

72. Having started as one of the four pillars of the global field support strategy, the supply chain management strategy will be rolled out by the Department of Field Support in the years ahead. The supply chain management strategy is guided by the vision to implement and maintain an agile and well-managed supply chain that effectively and efficiently supports clients in field missions. The Department is currently working on four supply chain projects: (a) an acquisition planning project; (b) an Incoterms project; (c) an East Africa corridor project; and (d) a centralized warehousing project.

73. The Office of Central Support Services is actively supporting these initiatives, in particular in the areas of acquisition planning and defining requirements, as these have a significant impact on the outcome and efficiency of the procurement process.

74. The Office of Central Support Services and the Department of Field Support will work closely together to ensure that the supply chain management strategy not only meets the Department's needs, but also satisfies the operational requirements of the entire Secretariat worldwide. While efficiency, responsiveness and agility will be key to successful supply chain management, the strategy must also ensure that proper controls and strong governance are built in. One such fundamental control is the principle of segregation of duties in the procurement function, which is not only a core principle of public procurement but is essential to the protection of the Organization from the risks associated with fraud and corruption.

C. Global trends

1. New technologies introduced through technology and innovation fairs

75. The Procurement Division, in cooperation with the Department of Field Support, has conducted technology fairs with the aim of introducing to United

Nations officials new products, ideas, designs, concepts and technologies that can be used to meet United Nations field requirements. To date, two technology fairs have been held, one in New York, on 20 March 2014, and one in Valencia, Spain, on 23 and 24 April 2015. Such interactions between United Nations officials and vendors presenting new technologies help to keep the Secretariat abreast of critical product developments, which is extremely important for field operations.

76. As a result of the fair held in Valencia, two pilot projects have been undertaken to test products in United Nations field environments with minimal investment. A pilot project based on waste incineration technology was undertaken to address the mounting challenge of waste processing and management in peacekeeping missions. Similarly, a pilot project is being carried out at UNMISS to address the need for robust portable temporary living facilities for rapid troop and personnel deployment in remote areas.

77. On the basis of the above pilot projects, the United Nations will be able to gather and analyse technical data in order to determine the suitability of the technology and develop the necessary generic specifications that will be used to competitively source similar products in the open market. The Procurement Division is ready to initiate similar events in future, subject to the support of the Department of Field Support.

2. Update on efforts to eliminate the negative impact of United Nations facilities and operations on the environment

78. In paragraph 96 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 66/288, entitled "The future we want", Member States requested the United Nations system to improve the management of facilities and operations by taking into account sustainable development practices, in accordance with legislative frameworks, including financial rules and regulations. Recalling this, in its resolution 70/205, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit an action plan with the specific goal of achieving a United Nations that does not, through its operations or facilities management, have a negative impact on the climate, to be reached as soon as possible or by 2020. The plan, providing details of environmental management systems, is to be submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-first session.

79. As at November 2016, 28 out of 66 United Nations entities reported having various types of emission reduction plans, including environmental management systems. In September 2015, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including target 12.7, to promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities. The procurement of goods and equipment to support the implementation of mandates for improved environmental management within the United Nations continues in accordance with the general principles stipulated in financial regulation 5.12, namely, best value for money; fairness, integrity and transparency; effective international competition; and the interest of the United Nations.

80. In line with the current guidance, the Secretariat is reviewing efforts to reduce its negative environmental impact, including through the use of more energy-efficient infrastructure and transport, increased use of renewable energy, especially solar power, and improved waste management systems. It is noted that the use of generic specifications and non-mandatory evaluation criteria fosters international

competition for products and technologies, while life cycle costing is consistent with the procurement principle of best value.

IV. Conclusion

81. **On the basis of its professional expertise and experience, the Procurement Division has maintained and enhanced its critical support role in the Secretariat and has strengthened client-oriented procurement services over recent years. The Division has successfully supported the deployment of various field missions, including the first-ever emergency health mission, the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. In addition to reforming procurement practices in critical areas of operations, such as aviation, the Procurement Division has substantially strengthened governance, compliance and the culture of ethics and integrity in United Nations procurement.**

82. **While being part of and affected by major initiatives shaping the future of the Secretariat, the volume and complexity of worldwide procurement operations have increased, requiring an organizational structure and governance framework that is highly responsive to clients' needs. Given the opportunity created by the implementation of Umoja, procurement operations are undergoing transformative changes that allow for the optimization of effective and efficient processes. In collaboration with various Secretariat offices and other stakeholders, the Division is further optimizing its support to clients. The reshaping of the procurement organization worldwide as envisaged would lead to significant benefits in terms of improved service to clients and reduced cost.**

83. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.**

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The situation in Afghanistan

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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/11 and Security Council resolution 2274 (2016), in which I was requested to report every three months on developments in Afghanistan.

2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including significant humanitarian, development and human rights efforts, since the issuance of my previous report (A/71/616-S/2016/768). It also provides a summary of key political and security developments and regional and international events relating to Afghanistan.

II. Relevant developments

3. The President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, and the Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, presented the Afghan National Peace and Development Framework at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, held on 5 October, in which international partners confirmed their intention to provide $15.2 billion in support of the country's development priorities until 2020. Ongoing tensions in the executive branch and the vote to dismiss several Cabinet ministers by the lower house of the National Assembly contributed to political volatility. This occurred against a backdrop of intensifying armed clashes between security forces and the Taliban. The names of commissioners for the electoral management bodies that are to pursue electoral reforms and prepare for elections were announced. The Government also advanced its anti-corruption agenda. A peace agreement was signed by the Government with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin), but prospects for talks

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with the Taliban have not improved. Increasing levels of violence resulted in high civilian casualties, including a disturbing number of child casualties, and significant new displacements. The rate of return of Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghans from Pakistan increased rapidly, further exacerbating the fragile humanitarian situation.

A. Political developments

4. President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah took steps to address their working relationship after a period of tensions. The two leaders held a series of meetings to discuss their differences, including on power-sharing, delegation of responsibilities between senior government officials, and high-level appointments.

5. Criticism was voiced by other senior political figures within the Government on its inner workings. On 24 October, the First Vice-President, Abdul Rashid Dostum, publicly accused the President and the Chief Executive of nepotism and ethnic bias in appointments. The offices of the President and the Chief Executive condemned the First Vice-President's statement. Other government figures also publicly stated their concerns: the President's Special Representative on Reforms and Good Governance, Ahmad Zia Massoud, underlined the need for the Government to overcome rifts in its leadership, and the Second Vice-President, Sarwar Danish, and the Second Deputy of the Chief Executive, Mohammad Mohaqiq, called attention to the need for greater power-sharing in the Government and stressed the need to improve its workings, respectively.

6. The second anniversary of the Government passed without notable incident, but underlying tensions have yet to be constructively addressed. After its earlier assertions that the political agreement of 2014 establishing the National Unity Government expired two years after its signing, the Afghan Protection and Stability Council indicated after the anniversary on 21 September that it would seek to help the Government to carry out its five-year mandate. On 1 November, the Council formed a commission to assist with mediating disputes within Government. Other opposition figures, including the former President, Hamid Karzai, and his supporters, maintained a critical stance.

7. Vocal opposition to the Government continued from the Enlightenment Movement, an ethnic Hazara group seeking the rerouting of a major electricity infrastructure project and broader representation of the younger generation of Hazaras in Government. Meanwhile, following the ceremonial reburial by Tajik activists of former King Habibullah Kalakani early in September, ethnic Pashtun protesters staged several counterdemonstrations in Kabul and in south-eastern provinces. The registered political wing Hizb-i Islami (Arghandiwal) held demonstrations across the country in support of the peace agreement of 29 September between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin), while protests against the agreement were held in Baghlan Province.

8. In mid-November, the lower house of the National Assembly voted to dismiss senior Cabinet ministers on allegations that they had underspent their allocated development budgets. Between 12 and 15 November, the lower house of the National Assembly passed no-confidence votes on 7 of the 16 ministers summoned, namely the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Salahuddin Rabbani, the Minister of Public

Works, Mahmood Baligh, the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Nasreen Oryakhel, the Minister of Education, Assadullah Hanif Balkhi, the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation, Muhammadullah Batash, the Minister of Higher Education, Farida Momand, and the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Abdul Razaq Wahedi. On 19 October, the Minister of Tribal Affairs, Gulab Mangal, was appointed Governor of Nangarhar Province on 19 October, and on 7 November the Minister of Information and Culture, Abdul Bari Jahani, resigned. The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance have lacked appointed heads for several months. The dismissal of the Ministers of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled and of Higher Education would leave only two women ministers in the Cabinet.

9. The Government reaffirmed its commitment to implementing electoral reforms in the communiqué of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. On 25 September, following the parliament's failure in June to approve an earlier decree on electoral law, the Government issued a decree merging the Election Law and the Law on the Structure as well as the Duties and Authorities of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission into a single piece of legislation. It incorporated some of the recommendations of the Special Electoral Reform Commission formed in 2015, including changing the composition of the Selection Committee tasked with nominating new election commissions, reducing the number of Independent Election Commission commissioners from nine to seven, and reducing the length of their tenure from six years to five with staggered terms. It also mandates the Independent Election Commission to recommend to the Cabinet the electoral constituencies for the next parliamentary and provincial council elections, within three months of its appointment.

10. The recruitment process for the incoming electoral commissions started on 28 September. A Selection Committee was established and considered candidates for electoral commissions in sessions open to civil society, the media and the international community. Two shortlists, of 21 Independent Election Commission and 15 Electoral Complaints Commission nominees, were introduced to President Ghani on 9 November, and the Selection Committee announced the names of the nominees the following day. President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah met jointly with political figures on 12 and 17 November to discuss the appointment process. Between 14 and 16 November, the shortlisted nominees were interviewed by a panel chaired by President Ghani and comprising Mr. Abdullah, the Second Vice-President, the Attorney General, the Chairperson of the Independent Commission for Overseeing the Implementation of the Constitution, and a representative of the Supreme Court. The members of the election commissions were announced on 22 November. Of the 12 commissioners, 3 are women.

11. There was no substantive movement towards a peace process between the Government and the Taliban. Following a number of press reports in October, a Taliban spokesperson publicly acknowledged that a delegation from the political commission based in Qatar travelled to Pakistan to discuss various issues relating to Afghanistan with the movement's leadership and the Pakistani authorities.

12. The Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) signed a peace agreement on 29 September. Under the 25-article agreement, Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) formally recognized the Constitution of Afghanistan and promised to halt military activity,

while the Government agreed to welcome the group's participation in politics, to request the delisting of its figures from international sanctions and to incorporate some former members into the Afghan security forces, without specifying a vetting process to determine involvement in any serious crimes involving violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law, in contravention of international law. Furthermore, the agreement guaranteed judicial immunity to Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) members for past political and military actions and committed the Government to the conditional release of designated prisoners and detainees, as well as to ensuring the safe return of associated refugee families of the group from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

13. On 20 October, President Ghani issued a decree to establish a six-member Joint Executive Commission with representatives from the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) to oversee the implementation of the agreement. The Commission held its first meeting on 6 November. In a second decree, the Afghan security forces were instructed to stop fighting against militias affiliated with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) until their reintegration was completed. Discussions about the removal (delisting) of the group's leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, from the list of individuals sanctioned under Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) continued. To date, no formal request for the removal of Mr. Hekmatyar has been received by the Security Council Committee, either from Afghanistan as the country of origin or from the United States of America as the original listing State. On 12 November, Mr. Hekmatyar issued a statement asserting that Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) had no links to Al-Qaida, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or any other terrorist group, a precondition for delisting.

14. The High Peace Council made some progress in developing its future configuration, finalizing a list of 52 members, completing consultations on the Afghanistan National Peace and Reconciliation Strategy and submitting a revised structure to donors on 4 October. Provincial peace councils continued to function in a reduced format, and outreach by local authorities, tribal elders and ulema remained limited owing to volatile security conditions and the status of funding, which remained under discussion.

B. Security

15. The security situation further deteriorated during the reporting period with intensifying armed clashes between the Afghan security forces and the Taliban. Overall, the number of armed clashes between January and October 2016 increased by 22 per cent over 2015, reaching its highest level since the United Nations started recording incidents in 2007 and surpassing the previous record year of 2011. Although successful in securing all provincial capitals, the Afghan security forces continued to be challenged by the Taliban across Afghanistan.

16. Throughout the fall, the Taliban maintained a high operational tempo, intensifying its pressure on the provincial capitals of Helmand, Uruzgan, Farah and Kunduz while continuing to challenge government control in key districts and attempting to cut off key highways and supply routes. Between 16 August and 17 November, the United Nations recorded 6,261 security incidents across the

country, which represented a 9 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2015 and an 18 per cent increase against the same period in 2014.

17. On 3 October, the Taliban entered the Kunduz city centre. Expelled after only one week, Taliban fighters have maintained a significant presence in the city outskirts, despite clearance operations by the Afghan security forces supported by international military forces. The Taliban also captured the district administrative centres of Ghormach (Faryab Province), Omnah (Paktika Province) and Nawah-ye Barakzai (Helmand Province), in addition to launching offensives against district centres in the north-eastern, northern, south-eastern and eastern regions. The security forces have retaken control of Ghormach only.

18. Consistent with previous trends, armed clashes during the period accounted for the majority of security incidents at 65 per cent, followed by improvised explosive devices at 18 per cent. The southern, south-eastern and eastern regions continued to account for the majority of security incidents in the country with 66 per cent of the total incidents recorded during the period.

19. Anti-government elements continued their asymmetric attacks through abductions, intimidation and assassinations. In total, from 16 August to 17 November, 183 assassinations, including 27 failed attempts, were recorded, representing a 32 per cent decrease against the same period in 2015. In addition, 80 abductions were recorded across the country, including 11 instances of mass abductions. The number of suicide attacks increased to 19 from 18 in the same period in 2015. High-profile attacks in Kabul continued, including a complex attack against the Ministry of Defence on 5 September, which resulted in 41 people killed, and for which the Taliban claimed responsibility. On 12 November, the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide attack against the Bagram airfield in Parwan Province, which resulted in four people killed.

20. The operational capacity of the Afghan security forces remained under strain in the areas of command and control, leadership and logistics. Some progress was achieved in improving Afghan Air Force readiness and operational engagement. In October, Afghan Army troop levels and Afghan National Police numbers reached 87 per cent and 95 per cent, respectively, of target amounts.

21. In addition to the armed conflict between the Afghan security forces and the Taliban, fighting continued with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP). Since my previous report, Afghan security forces, supported by international military assets, have conducted regular air and ground operations against ISIL-KP in both Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces. These operations have confined the group's presence in both provinces. An additional, smaller presence of ISIL-KP exists in Nuristan Province. ISIL-KP conducted four suicide attacks, including on 11 October in Kabul, on the holiday of Ashura, and on 21 November in Kabul against a Shia mosque. Other attacks claimed by ISIL-KP included a suicide attack on 31 October against the guesthouse of community leaders in the Pachir wa Agam district of Nangarhar Province and a suicide attack on 16 November against the vehicle of the presidential protection security forces in Kabul, which resulted in the death of 8 civilians and injured 13.

22. During the reporting period, 26 of the recorded incidents were either directly or indirectly against the United Nations. These included one case of killing, five

cases of intimidation and eight criminal-related incidents that affected mainly national staff members. On 22 October in Nangarhar Province, a United Nations road mission came under direct attack, including with rocket-propelled grenades. No staff sustained injuries. Owing to the deteriorating security situation, the United Nations temporarily reduced its footprint in the cities of Kunduz and Farah in October. Operations in both locations have since resumed.

C. Regional cooperation

23. Since my previous report, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have remained strained. Nevertheless, dialogue continued, including on economic cooperation. President Ghani met the Adviser to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, on the margins of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. Pakistan pledged $500 million in economic assistance to Afghanistan and was publicly thanked by both the President and Mr. Abdullah. However, several members of the lower house of the National Assembly, as well as demonstrators in Paktika Province on 7 October, called upon President Ghani to reject the assistance from Pakistan and accused Pakistan of supporting terrorism, calling for its cessation. President Ghani condemned the attack in Quetta, Pakistan, on 24 October, during which at least 61 Pakistani police cadets were killed, and reiterated his call for regional cooperation against terrorism.

24. Afghanistan and India continued their close cooperation: on 14 and 15 September President Ghani visited New Delhi, where he and the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, called upon those concerned to cease providing support and safe havens to terrorists, including those who target Afghanistan and India. The Government of India pledged an additional $1 billion in development assistance to Afghanistan and renewed its commitment to the trilateral Islamic Republic of Iran-Afghanistan-India transit corridor through the Iranian port of Chabahar. On 16 September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan reiterated concerns that Afghanistan was increasingly being used by "a neighbour" for subversive activities inside Pakistan. On 21 September, a trilateral meeting was held between Afghanistan, India and the United States in New York, during which the countries reaffirmed a shared interest in advancing peace and security in the region and countering terrorism. On 4 October, the European Union hosted a dinner with international partners and countries, including those from the region. The European Union stated that common ground existed for regional political support of peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

25. Afghanistan undertook efforts to deepen engagement with Gulf States, including on a peace process and cooperation on counter-terrorism. Mr. Abdullah visited Saudi Arabia from 17 to 19 October and received pledges from King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud for supporting a peace process, countering terrorist financing and providing development assistance. On 25 October, President Ghani travelled to Qatar, whose leadership committed to supporting the peace process and announced plans to open an embassy in Kabul.

26. Infrastructure development and security cooperation continued between Central Asian countries, Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. On 7 September, construction began on the Afghan section of a railway linking Herat in

western Afghanistan to the Iranian rail network. Trade and connectivity were also the focus of a visit to Herat on 30 October by the Governor of Khorasan-e Razavi Province in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Turkmenistan and Afghanistan inaugurated a rail sector connecting the Atamyrat-Imamnazar railway in Turkmenistan to Aqina in Afghanistan on 30 October. Regional cooperation on addressing security challenges and initiatives to strengthen regional economic cooperation featured at the centre of discussions at the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Senior Officials Meeting held in New York on 23 September. The need to link infrastructure development with regional policy cooperation was further emphasized during the Regional Economic Cooperation side event held on 4 October on the margins of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, during which regional countries welcomed five regional connectivity projects on the movement of goods, energy and data identified as priorities by Afghanistan. On 2 and 3 November, at a meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Abdullah called for support for the full membership of Afghanistan in the Organization, describing it as an important platform for regional security cooperation.

27. Afghanistan and Uzbekistan increased their engagement during the reporting period. President Ghani discussed bilateral economic cooperation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov, on 4 October, on the margins of the Brussels Conference. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mr. Rabbani, visited Tashkent to attend the forty-third session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on 18 and 19 October. During his visit, he signed an extradition treaty with Mr. Kamilov, who reaffirmed his country's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation and to participating actively in all international meetings and conferences on Afghanistan.

III. Human rights

28. On 19 October, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released its report on the protection of civilians in Afghanistan covering the period from 1 January to 30 September. UNAMA documented 8,397 civilian casualties (2,562 deaths and 5,835 injuries), representing a 1 per cent decrease compared with the same period in 2015. The casualty figures include 877 women (240 deaths and 637 injured), a 12 per cent decrease compared with the same period in 2015. UNAMA attributed 61 per cent of all civilian casualties to anti-government elements; 23 per cent to pro-government forces; and 11 per cent to ground fighting between pro-government forces and anti-government elements where the responsible party could not be identified. Of the civilian casualties, 5 per cent were attributed to unexploded ordnance or explosive remnants of war. Ground engagements remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, causing 39 per cent of all civilian casualties, followed by suicide and complex attacks and improvised explosive devices. While UNAMA recorded decreases in civilian casualties attributed to suicide and complex attacks and improvised explosive devices, child casualties increased by 15 per cent compared with the same period in 2015.

29. UNAMA also documented a 67 per cent increase in civilian casualties caused by explosive remnants of war and a 72 per cent increase in civilian casualties caused

by aerial operations carried out by international and Afghan security forces. That pattern continued from September until November, with air strikes targeting anti-government elements causing civilian casualties in Nangarhar, Uruzgan and Kunduz Provinces. This included an international military air strike against the Taliban in the city of Kunduz on 3 November that resulted in the death of 32 civilians and injured 50, the majority of whom were women and children. On 2 October, the working group established by the Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Board to draft an action plan for implementing the national policy on civilian casualty mitigation held its first meeting. Relevant ministries were advised to review their rules of engagement accordingly. As a member of the working group and an observer to the Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Board, UNAMA provides technical input in line with international law and practices.

30. The Taliban attack on the city of Kunduz resulted in urban fighting that continued until 13 October. Between 3 and 13 October, UNAMA documented a preliminary figure of 328 civilian casualties (10 deaths and 318 injured) from incidents in the city of Kunduz and surrounding districts. The majority of civilian casualties reportedly resulted from ground fighting between the Taliban and the Afghan security forces.

31. Attacks conducted by anti-government elements directly targeting civilians or in civilian-populated areas continued. On 11 October, ISIL-KP claimed responsibility for a complex attack on a Shia shrine during the Ashura commemoration in Kabul, which resulted in the death of 19 civilians and injured 60. On 12 October in the Balkh district of Balkh Province, 18 civilians were killed and 47 injured in a remote-controlled detonation of an improvised explosive device at a Shia shrine. No group has claimed responsibility. On 10 November, a suicide attacker detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device targeting the German consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif, killing 4 civilians and injuring 128, including 19 women and 38 children. The Taliban claimed responsibility. On 21 November, at least 32 civilians were killed and 50 injured in a suicide attack against a Shia mosque in Kabul. ISIL-KP claimed responsibility.

32. On 18 October, UNAMA issued a report on the attack in Kabul on 23 July against ethnic Hazara demonstrators, in which 85 civilians were killed and more than 400 injured. In the report, it was concluded that the attack deliberately targeted civilians and constituted a serious violation of international humanitarian law that might amount to a war crime. It was also noted that the attack appeared to have deliberately targeted persons belonging to a specific ethnic and religious community. ISIL-KP claimed responsibility for the attack, employing language that advocated religious hatred and violence.

33. Between 1 July and 30 September, the country task force on monitoring and reporting documented and verified 438 incidents that resulted in 919 child casualties (245 deaths and 674 injuries). Ground engagements remained the leading cause of child casualties, resulting in 512 casualties, followed by improvised explosive devices, with 149 child casualties, and explosive remnants of war, with 135 child casualties. The task force attributed the remaining child casualties to tactics including aerial bombardments, incidents of targeted killing where children were bystanders, and suicide attacks.

34. The country task force attributed 411 child casualties (45 per cent), the largest number, to anti-government elements, including 324 casualties attributed to the Taliban, followed by pro-government forces (33 per cent), of which 82 per cent were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. Five casualties were attributed to cross-border shelling. The remaining 200 child casualties could not be attributed to any party to the conflict. During the reporting period, the task force verified 38 incidents targeting or affecting health services and health-related personnel, compared with 19 in the previous quarter. The task force also verified 34 incidents targeting or affecting education and education-related personnel, 3 incidents of abductions involving 1 girl and 10 boys and 28 incidents of denial of humanitarian access. The task force verified the recruitment and use of at least nine boys. The majority of the violations were attributed to anti-government elements. The Ministry of the Interior continued to expand the number of child protection units in Afghan National Police recruitment centres and opened four new units in Daykundi, Paktiya, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces, bringing their total number throughout the country to 17.

35. The Government made efforts to address the workplace conditions for women employees and strengthen the legal framework against harassment. On 25 October, the Ministry of Women's Affairs issued a report highlighting obstacles to women's entry and career advancement in government institutions, including lack of leadership opportunities, nepotism, inadequate infrastructure and harassment. On 20 October, the United Nations completed the first round of a capacity development programme on transformational leadership for 39 women ministers and senior officials. The training was aimed at improving their leadership capacity and influence on gender equality. During the reporting period, at least nine provincial commissions on the elimination of harassment against women were established pursuant to the regulation combating such harassment approved in 2015. On 9 November, the lower house of the National Assembly approved a law on the elimination of harassment against women and girls.

36. The United Nations continued its efforts to advance Afghan women's equal and full participation in building peace and security. On 25 October, the United Nations hosted the annual Global Open Day event in Kabul on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security in parallel with events in 13 provinces focused on women and violent extremism in Afghanistan. The more than 400 participants, over half of whom were Afghan women from civil society, recognized women's crucial role in fostering a peaceful society and challenging radical ideologies by dissuading members of their families and communities from becoming violent extremists. In line with efforts facilitating the implementation of the resolution 1325 (2000) agenda, on 28 November UNAMA briefed the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, co-chaired by Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for the second time in 2016. Together with national institutions and civil society, UNAMA conducted public awareness campaigns and training on women's rights across the country. For example, to strengthen the capacity of security sector personnel to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, UNAMA trained 525 members of policewomen councils in 20 provinces in October and November, focusing on human rights and domestic legal frameworks protecting women from violence.

37. During the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign from 25 November to 10 December, the United Nations supported outreach activities across the country with national institutions and civil society. This included radio programmes, theatre performances and debates aimed at mobilizing the public, as well as religious and community leaders, to address violence against women and call for investment in women and girls.

38. On 29 September, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the revised penal code after a four-year process supported by the United Nations. The revised code incorporates the required criminal provisions from the United Nations Convention against Corruption and reduces the number of crimes subject to the death penalty by more than 50 per cent. The code also incorporates other significant provisions, including all provisions of the Rome Statute relating to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, criminal liability against civilian superiors or military commanders who fail to prevent or punish subordinates who commit these crimes, and prohibition on the practice of land-grabbing with safeguards for displaced persons; and expands the 1976 definition of the crime of torture to comply with the Convention. Meanwhile, the revised version of the presidential decree as amended by the National Assembly in June formally took effect on 6 October.

IV. Implementation of the Kabul process and the coordination of development assistance

39. On 5 October, Afghanistan and the European Union co-hosted the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, attended by 75 countries and 26 international organizations. International partners confirmed their intention to provide $15.2 billion in support of the country's development priorities until 2020. At the Conference, President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah highlighted their Government's progress in public finance, private sector promotion, agriculture and anti-corruption. They stressed the importance of Afghan-led peace processes as a facilitating factor for development. In the Conference communiqué, participants reaffirmed their commitment to the three pillars of the Transformation Decade, including Afghan-led State- and institution-building as outlined in the Afghan National Peace and Development Framework and the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework; sustained international support and funding at or near current levels until 2020 with increased aid effectiveness; and regional and international support for ending violence to foster economic development and improve regional economic cooperation, as well as for a political process towards lasting peace and reconciliation. In the communiqué, the continuing imperative to protect and implement constitutional and international human rights was acknowledged, with special attention to the rights of women and children and to combating torture, ill-treatment and discrimination.

40. The Brussels Conference was held against the backdrop of a significant drop in investment and continued economic decline. According to data released by the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency on 15 October, domestic investment decreased by 47.42 per cent and foreign direct investment by 55.68 per cent during the first half of 2016, compared with the same period in 2015. The agriculture sector was the most affected, with an 85 per cent decline in investments. The drop in

investment is attributed primarily to worsening security conditions, political volatility, pressures on the economy following the influx of returnees, and overall uncertainties on short-term economic growth rates.

41. In an effort to mitigate the consequences of dramatic declines in investment, the Government and the World Bank announced funding for community-based development initiatives. On 25 September, the Government announced that $638 million from the International Development Association of the World Bank, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund administrated by the World Bank, and the Government would be allocated to support four years of community-based development initiatives planned and overseen by community development councils.

42. The Government continued to pursue its anti-corruption agenda, including the investigation and prosecution of major corruption cases and the strengthening of the regulatory and legal framework. On 2 October, the President inaugurated the new Anti-Corruption Justice Centre. To date, the Centre has received eight cases meeting its jurisdictional threshold. The first trial was held on 12 November, resulting in the conviction of a bank branch manager for embezzlement of $152,500. The second trial was completed on 19 November and resulted in the conviction of a high-ranking prosecutor in the Attorney General's Office for bribery and a two-and-a-half-year sentence with a fine.

43. The Government prioritized the preparation of anti-corruption strategies by the five ministries generating the most revenues, namely the Ministries of Finance; Mines and Petroleum; Commerce and Industries; Transport and Civil Aviation; and Communications and Information Technology. Following their submission to the Cabinet and review by the High Council on Governance, Justice and Anti-Corruption, the five draft strategies are currently undergoing further revision. In September, the secretariat of the High Council held consultations with the international community, civil society and government institutions on the drafting of the national anti-corruption strategy to meet the commitment made in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework.

44. UNAMA marked the first International Day for Universal Access to Information on 28 September with outreach events held in Kabul and eight provinces. On 16 October, the President issued a decree aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Access to Information Law adopted in 2014 by requiring all government institutions to categorize confidential information, hold weekly media briefings and monthly press conferences on their activities, and send monthly performance reports to the Office of Administrative Affairs.

45. The Government continued its work on the revision of the subnational governance policy, one of the Government's short-term commitments under the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. The draft policy was shared with donors for comments on 27 October. During the reporting period, four new district governors were appointed through a merit-based recruitment process, bringing the total number of district governors appointed by the National Unity Government under such a process to 83 out of 376 district governors.

46. The Government took steps to implement its 2015 policy on police civilianization. On 28 August, the Minister of the Interior introduced 31 civilian deputy provincial chiefs of police appointed through a merit-based process. These

deputies are expected to support the provincial chiefs of police on administrative and logistics issues, including with regard to procurement to reduce inefficient procedures and corrupt practices. UNAMA continued to support officials of the Ministry of the Interior in finalizing a detailed action plan to address key gaps and redundancies in the areas of police leadership, training, command and control, monitoring and evaluation.

V. Humanitarian assistance

47. The humanitarian situation became ever more fragile, with rapidly increasing numbers of new conflict-induced internal displacements exacerbated by the surge of more than 600,000 returning refugees and undocumented Afghans from Pakistan. Combined with the existing needs in Afghanistan, 4.5 million people currently require humanitarian assistance.

48. As at 30 November, the United Nations had recorded 515,865 newly internally displaced persons since January 2016 in 31 of the 34 provinces, with more than 240,000 displaced since mid-August. This represents the highest number of internally displaced persons on record and a 15 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2015. In October, more than 70,000 people were displaced as a result of the Taliban's attempt to take control of the city of Kunduz. An estimated 16,500 people were also displaced in the past two months in southern Afghanistan owing to intensified conflict, primarily from Helmand and Uruzgan Provinces. The United Nations and non-governmental organizations provided humanitarian assistance, including cash, health services and supplies, shelter, food and non-food items, to the displaced populations. Access constraints limited both a complete understanding of the humanitarian needs and the response thereto. As at 3 November, 63 aid workers had been abducted during 2016, compared with 93 in 2015.

49. During her visit to Afghanistan from 11 to 20 November, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons called for enhanced support for durable solutions, improved access to national identity cards for internally displaced persons and the full implementation of the national policy on internally displaced persons adopted in February 2014.

50. The number of refugees returning through the United Nations repatriation programme increased by 450 per cent since 1 July, compared with the very low numbers between January and June. By 29 November, a total of 372,282 Afghans registered as refugees had returned from Pakistan, while 2,220 had returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 167 from other countries. In October alone, there were 148,692 Afghan refugees newly returned from Pakistan. In November, returns slowed considerably, owing to the temporary suspension by UNHCR of facilitated registration during the winter. Between 1 and 12 November, 52,595 refugees returned to Afghanistan. According to returnee monitoring, the significant spike in return from Pakistan in the second half of the year coincided with a deterioration of the protection environment for Afghans in several areas of Pakistan and uncertainty as to whether Afghans would be able to stay in the long term in Pakistan.

51. Deportations and returns of undocumented Afghans from Pakistan also increased significantly, with more than 204,000 arrivals since 1 July compared with

nearly 34,000 for the first six months of the year. Arrivals remained steady from the Islamic Republic of Iran, averaging 30,000 to 40,000 per month, in line with seasonal trends. As at 30 November, the 642,737 undocumented Afghan returnees included 444,210 spontaneous returns (227,921 from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 216,289 from Pakistan) and 198,527 deportations (176,178 from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 22,349 from Pakistan). Returnees from Pakistan continue to cite increased policing and uncertainty over their status in Pakistan, including a fear of eviction, as the main reasons for leaving. The deadline of 15 November for all undocumented Afghans in Pakistan to acquire documentation to be issued by the Government of Afghanistan or face future deportation has passed.

52. Many of the newly displaced and returnee Afghans moving within Afghanistan are vulnerable and prone to secondary or repeated displacement because of security concerns and the limited ability of cities to absorb the influx. An assessment of more than 6,000 returnee families in the eastern region found that many faced challenges in gaining access to food, shelter and basic services, in particular health care and adequate water and sanitation.

53. Afghan migration to Europe continued at a slower pace compared with 2015, when 209,367 Afghans arrived by sea. From 1 January to 31 October 2016, 47,149 Afghans arrived in Europe by sea, representing 14 per cent of arrivals. In September 2016, that figure stood at 17 per cent.

54. Overall returnee numbers significantly decreased during the third quarter of the year, with 1,439 returnees assisted, compared with 2,639 during the second quarter out of a total of 5,478 in 2016. The International Organization for Migration assisted 731 voluntary returnees from Europe, of whom 75 per cent were men, between 1 September and 31 October 2016, compared with 188 for the same period in 2015 and 4,527 between 1 January and 31 July 2016. Almost half of the returnees departed from Germany, and increasing numbers were reported from Greece and Turkey. On 2 October, the Government of Afghanistan and the European Union issued the declaration entitled "Joint Way Forward on Migration Issues" to address and prevent "irregular migration" and returns.

55. Afghanistan remains one of three polio-endemic countries in the world. Four new polio cases were identified during the reporting period, bringing the total number of new polio cases in Afghanistan in 2016 to 12 as at 31 October 2016. The cases were reported from the east, south and south-east of the country. Efforts to eradicate polio continued but were challenged by security and access constraints. The number of children who could not be vaccinated almost doubled during the reporting period to an estimated 600,000 children in October, primarily because of insecurity, active fighting and bans by anti-government elements. This includes more than 170,000 children who were inaccessible in Kunduz Province because of bans by anti-government elements on house-to-house vaccination activities, and an estimated 300,000 children who were inaccessible in Farah Province and southern Afghanistan owing to active fighting. Accessibility improved in eastern Afghanistan owing to successful access dialogues with representatives of anti-government elements through community leaders, with the number of inaccessible children being reduced from 71,000 in August to 23,000 in October.

56. Humanitarian access constraints continue to be recorded and are associated primarily with insecurity and conflict-related road closures in the eastern, southern

and northern parts of the country. In total, 67 incidents against non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and other international organizations were registered between 1 August and 31 October, compared with 45 in the previous quarter. Four aid workers were killed and four injured during the period compared with five killed and five injured during the previous period.

57. Mine action partners, coordinated by the United Nations, cleared 287 minefields, 12 battlefields and 18 firing ranges between 1 August and 30 October, which resulted in 29 communities being declared mine-free and 67,493 individuals across 83.8 km^2 able to resume free movement for their activities. It is estimated that 3,795 minefields, 323 battlefields and 59 contaminated firing ranges remain, affecting 1,564 communities, along with a continued threat from pressure-plate improvised explosive devices. Since January, the United Nations and mine action partners have provided risk education concerning mines and explosive remnants of war to 466,030 returnees from Pakistan at encashment centres and other registration points.

58. On 5 September, the United Nations launched a flash appeal for $152 million to provide life-saving assistance for internally displaced persons, undocumented returnees and registered refugees. Out of $42.2 million in pledges so far, $40.2 million has been received. As at 20 November, overall humanitarian funding for Afghanistan stood at $401 million, of which $177.7 million was designated for activities envisaged in the 2016 Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan, now 52 per cent funded. To date, the common humanitarian fund in Afghanistan has received $46.7 million in 2016, with funding focused on emergency health care, assistance to displaced families and humanitarian assessments.

VI. Counter-narcotics

59. The Afghan Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime released the executive summary of the Afghanistan opium survey report on 23 October. In the report, it was noted that the total area under opium poppy cultivation increased by 10 per cent in 2016, to an estimated 201,000 ha. Cultivation increased particularly strongly in northern Afghanistan and in Badghis Province, and opium poppy is grown in 21 of 34 provinces, compared with 20 in 2015. For the first time since 2008, opium cultivation was reported in Jawzjan Province. With some 80,273 ha (40 per cent of the national total), Helmand remains the country's leading opium-cultivating province, followed by Badghis, Kandahar and Uruzgan Provinces.

60. The report includes estimates on potential opium production, which contain some methodological limitations in areas where a yield survey could not be undertaken owing to security constraints. Potential opium production in 2016 amounted to 4,800 tons, an increase of 43 per cent from its 2015 level of 3,300 tons. The high production can be attributed to increases in the opium yield per hectare and in the cultivation and to extremely limited eradication efforts due to funding and security constraints. Most importantly, yields increased significantly as a result of favourable weather conditions and the absence of crop disease. The nationwide increases were mostly caused by a rise in production in the western and southern regions of Afghanistan by 37 and 36 per cent, respectively. Both regions account for

84 per cent of the total opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. In addition, eradication efforts decreased by 91 per cent compared with 2015, resulting in only 355 ha, or 1 per cent, of total areas under cultivation eradicated in 2016.

61. Between 18 August and 31 October, Afghan law enforcement authorities reportedly conducted 425 counter-narcotics operations, which resulted in the seizure of 1,002 kg of heroin, 29,425 kg of morphine, 29,922 kg of opium, 5 kg of methamphetamine, 1,788 kg of hashish, 269 MDMA tablets, 35,887 kg of solid precursor chemicals and 10,753 litres of liquid precursor chemicals. In addition, 16 heroin processing laboratories were reportedly dismantled, 485 suspects arrested and 110 vehicles, 44 weapons, 74 mobile telephones and one radio seized. One member of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces was killed and six wounded in the course of the operations.

62. Ministers and heads of drug agencies from Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan and Central Asian States met in September in Dushanbe for a conference on challenges surrounding the illicit economy and in promoting the licit economy in Afghanistan, organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. Investigators from Afghanistan, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan met on 8 November in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to review investigations of illicit precursor seizures.

VII. Mission support

63. Following the completion of preparatory activities, the next phase of the Umoja platform was launched in UNAMA on 1 November, adding more than 1,100 national staff as new users. Between 1 August and 31 October, UNAMA conducted 278 road and 623 air missions, as well as 343 reverse outreach missions, during which district representatives visited UNAMA field offices.

VIII. Observations

64. The joint commitment of Afghanistan and the international community was conclusively demonstrated at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit, held in July, and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, held in October. At the Brussels Conference, the political will to assist Afghanistan was matched by the confirmed intention to provide $15.2 billion to support the development priorities of Afghanistan until 2020. Not only did that amount exceed original expectations, but the discussions in Brussels also showed a deep appreciation for the challenges facing Afghanistan as it moves towards self-reliance. Combined with pledges made at the NATO Summit, Afghanistan has secured $8 billion in security and development assistance for each of the next four years. The Government and people of Afghanistan are currently able to seize that opportunity and meet the many challenges ahead.

65. Capitalizing on the current opportunities will require overcoming complex political, security, economic and humanitarian challenges. Continuing political tensions within and outside the Government further tested the unity and cohesion of

the political leadership. Increasing numbers of security incidents and attacks placed the Afghan security forces under heavy pressure as they fought to retain control of provincial capitals and district centres. The rising numbers of internally displaced persons and returning refugees and undocumented Afghans underlined the hardships facing the Afghan population and strained humanitarian response mechanisms. Those factors, along with the ongoing economic difficulties, require the Government's determined resolve. Building on their impressive commitments at the Brussels Conference, I reiterate my call upon President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah to continue their active engagement to chart a joint way forward for the benefit of the Afghan people.

66. In recent weeks, a number of leading Afghan political figures have taken steps to play a more constructive role. Public demands to replace the Government have diminished. All stakeholders are encouraged to seek positive results so that the Government can meet the manifold challenges facing the country.

67. The commitments from the NATO Summit and the Brussels Conference provide the resources and possibility for essential reforms, including in the areas of poverty reduction, governance, the rule of law and elections, and human rights. The Afghan National Peace and Development Framework and associated national priority programmes will serve as guides for funding decisions. Their realization will require constructive dialogue on development, aid policy and reform progress.

68. Maintaining the momentum from the Brussels Conference with robust follow-up action is essential. Even with the announced levels of civilian assistance, economic growth is expected to remain slow in the coming years. The Government has brought commendable focus to reforms, including for strengthening public financial management and developing a national anti-corruption strategy, in order to safeguard the public trust and ensure the effective use of resources. Through prosecutions guided by due process, the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre, fully operational at present, can increase the public's trust in State institutions and the Government's pledge to combat corruption.

69. I am encouraged by the renewed commitment of the Government, as outlined in the Brussels Conference communiqué, to promoting and protecting women's rights and economic empowerment. The equal and meaningful participation of women in the political and economic sphere will be essential for Afghanistan to meet its development objectives. At the recent Global Open Day events held throughout the country, Afghan women underlined their role in fostering a peaceful society, including in preventing violent extremism. Those commitments need to be translated into action, including continued concrete work and national financing to implement the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and relevant legal and policy frameworks protecting the rights of women and especially protecting women from violence.

70. I take note of the steps to implement the amended electoral legal framework and move towards preparing for elections. The nomination of candidates for electoral commissions in an open process accessible to representatives of civil society, media and the international community was a welcome development. An inclusive, consultative and transparent appointment process offers an opportunity to rebuild public trust and confidence in the electoral institutions.

71. Those encouraging steps were taken in the face of an intense conflict characterized by an increasing number of armed clashes and continuing complex attacks. While the Afghan security forces secured provincial capitals in 2016, support from the international military was at times crucial. In the absence of a comprehensive and viable peace process, predictable international support will be required for the overall sustainability of the security sector, combined with the political leadership necessary to ensure sufficient capacity and morale, in the light of high casualty rates.

72. The intensifying conflict continues to take a heavy toll on the civilian population through deaths, injuries and displacement. The evolving pattern of the conflict, in particular the increasing ground engagements, has added to the very difficult and dangerous environment for civilians and, most starkly, children. All parties to the conflict must increase efforts to ensure that civilians are protected. After the launch of the Government's national civilian casualty prevention and mitigation policy in July, it is my hope that the action plan can be completed without delay, to enable full implementation.

73. The ever-rising numbers of internally displaced persons are extremely vulnerable. Adequate assistance and mechanisms are essential to meeting their needs, including appropriate access to documentation and land. Internally displaced persons require protection and assistance from the Government, supported by national and international partners. I encourage the Government to accelerate the full implementation of the national policy on internally displaced persons, including the creation of conditions conducive to durable solutions. The fair and fast allocation of land and creation of livelihoods is integral if displaced people are to build a long-term future in their country.

74. The number of newly displaced persons is increasing in the context of an overall rise in the number of Afghans on the move. It is currently estimated that up to 1.6 million Afghans will have been internally displaced or newly returned from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran by the end of 2016. They will require assistance, as will those who repatriate from Europe. With the inclusion of internal displacement and refugees in the Afghan National Peace and Development Framework, such issues were recognized by many at the Brussels Conference as an element compounding the country's development challenges. In addition to immediate humanitarian assistance, government initiatives to develop an overall strategy for addressing the combined needs of the displaced and returnees are crucial. I welcome the proposal for a stronger coordinated approach between the Government, donors and the United Nations in making the transition from humanitarian support for displaced people and returnee populations to their integration within communities. Without the development of concrete plans to manage the process of integration, food insecurity and poverty will continue.

75. Peace remains imperative if Afghanistan is to reach its full potential. I take note of the importance of the peace agreement of 29 September between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) and the latter's commitments to renounce violence and links with terrorist groups. Agreements that reduce the level of violence and promote reconciliation, including by addressing the legitimate concerns of victims of the conflict, are important steps towards lasting peace in Afghanistan. As the agreement is implemented, I urge that the rights of the victims

of serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations of human rights, and their families, be made a central consideration. Beyond fulfilling obligations under international law, such processes also aid in reconciliation by enabling victims and survivors of violations to let go of their grievances.

76. I regret that efforts towards direct talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban have not progressed further. The Taliban movement appears to remain focused on combat operations under the leadership of Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada. Constructive engagement by Member States will be essential to creating conditions conducive for Afghan-led peace talks. In this regard, I note that the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan remains challenging, and I urge the two Governments to continue dialogue calibrated to promote peace and stability in their mutual interest.

77. Countries in the region have a critical role to play in supporting Afghanistan in meeting its complex political, security, humanitarian and economic challenges. I call upon them to play a constructive role in promoting stability and economic growth benefiting all countries in the region. The regional infrastructure initiatives presented at the Brussels Conference can serve as an important pathway towards prosperity and stability and should be prioritized. I am encouraged by recent tangible progress in the area of infrastructure, including transport links between Afghanistan and Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkmenistan, and enhanced engagement with Uzbekistan.

78. I thank all the United Nations personnel in Afghanistan and my Special Representative, Tadamichi Yamamoto, for their continued dedication under challenging conditions to fulfil our commitments in support of the people of Afghanistan.

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Seventy-first session
Agenda item 68
Promotion and protection of human rights

Letter dated 9 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you the following information on the results of the elections for the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 68.

(*Signed*) Muzaffar **Madrakhimov**

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Annex to the letter dated 9 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Results of the elections for President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

A meeting of the Central Electoral Commission took place on 9 December 2016, during which the results of the elections for President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, held on 4 December 2016, were considered.

The Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, Mr. Mirza-Ulugbek Abdusalomov, noted that citizens had actively participated in the voting and had shown a high level of political and civic engagement, as well as a sense of ownership in the future of their homeland.

Through their participation in the voting, citizens reaffirmed their support for the reforms being implemented in the country.

On the basis of the records received from the district electoral commissions, the Central Electoral Commission determined that, out of the 20,461,805 voters included in the electoral lists, 17,951,667 people had voted on 4 December 2016. This represents 87.73 per cent of the total electorate.

The election results show that the Milliy Tiklanish Democratic Party candidate, Mr. Sarvar Sadullaevich Otamuradov, received 421,055 votes (2.35 per cent of those voting); the candidate from the Movement of Entrepreneurs and Businesspeople — Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev, received 15,906,724 votes (88.61 per cent); the People's Democratic Party candidate, Mr. Khatamjon Abdurakhmonovich Ketmonov, received 669,187 votes (3.73 per cent); and the Justice Social Democratic Party's candidate, Mr. Narimon Majidovich Umarov, received 619,972 votes (3.46 per cent).

The presidential elections held on 4 December 2016 were therefore won by the candidate from the Movement of Entrepreneurs and Businesspeople — Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev.

In accordance with articles 90 and 117 of the Constitution, articles 14, 35 and 36 of the Political Parties Act and articles 5 and 9 of the Central Electoral Commission Act, the Central Electoral Commission decided to consider Mr. Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev as having been elected to the position of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for a term of five years.

During the meeting, it was noted that the elections had been held in accordance with the Constitution, the Suffrage Guarantees Act and the Presidential Elections Act, while ensuring the rights of citizens to freely participate and also observing the principles of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

Evidence of democracy and transparency in the electoral campaign was shown by the participation of approximately 600 observers from 46 States of the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa, and also from five international organizations: the Office

for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Association of World Election Bodies and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. More than 37,000 observers from political parties also participated in monitoring the electoral process.

The media played an enormous role in ensuring the openness and transparency of the elections. The presidential elections were covered by 615 national and 272 foreign media outlets, including 315 foreign and domestic online media outlets. The national press centre for the presidential elections and press centres at district electoral commissions held 180 press conferences, briefings and online briefings to cover important stages of the electoral campaign involving over 1,400 national and foreign journalists. The foreign and national media published over 22,700 articles alongside news stories, television reports and radio broadcasts about the preparations for and conduct of the elections for President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The elections for President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, held on 4 December, are another important step towards the country's ambitious goals of taking its proper place among the developed democratic countries of the world, modernizing its political and economic systems and ensuring a life of freedom, peace and prosperity for its people, as confirmation of our country's transition to a new stage of independent development.

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Question of Cyprus

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Letter dated 13 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I enclose herewith two separate annexes recording the infringements of international air traffic regulations and violations of the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by Turkey (see annex I) and the illegal use of closed ports by Turkish warships during the month of November 2016 (see annex II). It should also be noted that Turkish commercial aircraft systematically use the illegal airport of Tympou.

Furthermore, I wish to inform you that the occupation regime issued illegally two notices to airmen, on 4 and 15 November, relating to exercises conducted by the Turkish Air Force.

In addition, more recently, the occupation regime has started interfering in radio frequencies, including distress and emergency frequencies of the Republic of Cyprus, thus obstructing the smooth operation of the NAVTEX service, that delivers navigational and meteorological warnings and forecasts, as well as urgent maritime safety information to ships.

The actions by Turkey are clearly aimed at undermining the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus, bolstering the continuing de facto division and upgrading the secessionist entity's status, by claiming a purported airspace over the occupied territory of the Republic. Additionally, Turkey continues to systematically harass civilian and military aircraft within the Nicosia Flight Information Region (FIR) via radio calls. Meanwhile, Nicosia FIR infringements and violations of the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus continue unabated. The policy of Turkey of persistently breaching international law and defying international rules and regulations puts the safety of international civil aviation at risk, has a negative impact on the stability of the region and causes difficulties for air traffic over Cyprus.

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It should further be underlined that the continuation of the illegal actions by Turkey creates tension during a critical period for the successful outcome of the ongoing negotiation process for a peaceful comprehensive solution of the Cyprus problem.

On behalf of my Government, I strongly protest the continuing infringements of international air traffic regulations and the violations of the national airspace and the territorial waters of the Republic of Cyprus by Turkey and appeal for their immediate cessation. The Republic of Cyprus reiterates, in this respect, its call for adherence to the principle of sovereignty and non-interference enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

I would be grateful if you would circulate this letter and its annexes as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 41, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nicholas **Emiliou**

Annex I to the letter dated 13 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Airborne violations

Date	*Time*	*Nature of violation*
1 November	0728-1320	One Cougar Turkish military helicopter infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia flight information region (FIR) and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia air control centre (ACC).
	0846-1425	One Cougar Turkish military helicopter infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
2 November	0945-1005	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1400-1611	One Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1424-1444	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
3 November	0932-1106	One Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	0940-1110	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1318-1506	One S-70 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.

Date	Time	Nature of violation
	1335-1453	One Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
4 November	0243-0309	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	0710-0735	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
6 November	1300-1521	One Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
7 November	0905-1010	One Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1340-1500	One Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
8 November	0950-1100	One Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1325-1433	One Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
9 November	1248-1425	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.

Date	*Time*	*Nature of violation*
	1305-1420	One F-16 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1320-1416	Two F-4 and two F-16 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1425-1926	Two Cougar Turkish military helicopters infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
10 November	0920-1048	Two Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1343-1455	Two Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
11 November	0857-0917	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1108-1125	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
13 November	1328-1355	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1448-1500	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.

Date	*Time*	*Nature of violation*
	2056-2111	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	2205-2217	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
14 November	0940-1100	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1347-1457	One Cougar Turkish military helicopter infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1802-1816	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1846-1855	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
15 November	1628-1644	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1939-1948	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.

Date	*Time*	*Nature of violation*
16 November	1049-1110	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1058-1117	One C-160 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1414-1434	One C-160 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1627-1646	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1803-1825	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	2025-2049	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
17 November	1105-1235	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1331-1350	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1348-1444	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1429-1438	Two F-4 and two F-16 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.

Date	*Time*	*Nature of violation*
21 November	1045-1135	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
24 November	0836-0958	One Cougar Turkish military helicopter infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	0937-1110	One Cougar Turkish military helicopter infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	0950-1151	One CN-235 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations by entering the Nicosia FIR without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	1350-1500	One UH-1 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
	2139-2158	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.
25 November	1504-1514	One GLF-4 Turkish military aircraft infringed international air traffic regulations and violated the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by entering the Nicosia FIR and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus without diplomatic permit or contacting the Nicosia ACC.

Annex II to the letter dated 13 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

Naval violations

Dates	*Nature of violation*
31 October-9 November	One P-334 Turkish missile vessel violated the territorial waters of the Republic of Cyprus and illegally used the closed port of Famagusta while participating in a naval operation of the occupation forces.
8-16 November	One P-333 Turkish missile vessel violated the territorial waters of the Republic of Cyprus and illegally used the closed port of Famagusta while participating in a naval operation of the occupation forces.
14-18 November	One S-356 Turkish submarine violated the territorial waters of the Republic of Cyprus and illegally used the closed port of Keryneia while participating in naval exercises of the occupation forces.
15-16 November	One F-491 Turkish frigate violated the territorial waters of the Republic of Cyprus and illegally used the closed port of Keryneia while participating in naval exercises of the occupation forces.
19 November	One P-336 Turkish missile vessel violated the territorial waters of the Republic of Cyprus and illegally used the closed port of Famagusta while participating in a naval operation of the occupation forces.

United Nations A/71/685

General Assembly

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General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 39
Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Letter dated 9 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 39.

(*Signed*) V. **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 9 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America

The Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation is deeply concerned by the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba that has persisted for over 55 years.

Unilateral and politically motivated restrictive measures are a long-standing practice applied by the United States against many sovereign States, as a means of punishing them for internal and external policies that are independent of Washington.

Despite the consolidated position of the international community on the need to lift the embargo against Cuba, as expressed in relevant General Assembly resolutions and in statements by parliaments around the world, the embargo against the Republic of Cuba by the United States of America continues. These actions by the United States of America towards a neighbouring independent State are entirely inconsistent with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, including the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, and are in flagrant violation of human rights.

Some recent easing of the sanctions regime by the United States of America has not substantially altered the hegemonic policy of the White House and, to date, none of the United States legislation establishing the embargo has been repealed. Moreover, in September 2016, the United States embargo against the Republic of Cuba was extended.

The Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation considers the immediate lifting of sanctions against Cuba to be an objective and long-overdue necessity. The unilateral economic pressure being imposed by the United States of America on the Republic of Cuba for political ends today is an unwarranted remnant of the past, a legacy of the Cold War. This practice has done tremendous damage to the socioeconomic development of the Republic of Cuba and other countries.

The continuation of sanctions contravenes the provisions of the General Assembly resolution of 25 September 2015 entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which contains a direct call to all States to refrain from applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and that impede the achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.

The Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation expresses its support for the people of the friendly Republic of Cuba, which

selflessly defends its sovereignty and inalienable right to choose its own development model.

The Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation supports the appeal from the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation addressed to the General Assembly, the parliaments of States Members of the United Nations and international parliamentary organizations on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba and calls on the parliaments of States Members of the United Nations and on international parliamentary organizations to demonstrate their solidarity and conviction that it is unacceptable, in relations between States, to use methods and means that flout the generally recognized principles and norms of international law.

United Nations A/71/686

General Assembly

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Seventy-first session
Agenda items 134 and 73 (a)

Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Oceans and the law of the sea

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/71/L.26

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/71/16), in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/71/L.26 on oceans and the law of the sea. During its consideration of the statement, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, received on 9 December 2016.

2. In resolution 65/37 A, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to designate the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat, to provide secretariat support to the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (the Regular Process), including its established institutions.

II. Activities related to the proposed request

3. The recommendations and programme of work for the period 2017-2020 of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process are set out in section III and the attachment thereto of its report (see A/71/362). The activities are

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organized under two outputs: the second World Ocean Assessment(s) and Regular Process support for other ocean-related intergovernmental processes.

4. In order to implement draft resolution A/71/L.26, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea would have to perform, inter alia, the following functions (see A/C.5/71/16, para. 11):

(a) Provide support to the Regular Process, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole (which will hold two meetings in 2017), the Bureau of the Working Group, the Co-Chairs, the Group of Experts, the regional workshops, the delegations and the network of national focal points;

(b) Hold inter-agency cooperation and coordination meetings;

(c) Prepare, draft or review documents including technical abstracts, briefings and summaries of views;

(d) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns and develop and maintain a website;

(e) Administer the Regular Process trust fund.

5. The Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of supporting the operations of the Regular Process, which was established in 2010, has received contributions amounting to an average of $57,000 per year.[1] The Committee was also informed that since the inception of the voluntary trust fund, the limited funds available have been sufficient only for assisting members of the Group of Experts from developing countries in attending meetings of the Group of Experts, and meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole. In addition, the Secretary-General was able to secure some in-kind contributions for the implementation of the first cycle of the Regular Process, notably for the hosting of regional workshops. **The Advisory Committee encourages the Secretary-General to renew his efforts to secure contributions to the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of supporting the operations of the Regular Process.**

6. The Advisory Committee was also informed upon enquiry that to achieve the outputs for 2017, the Division would have to carry out the following activities in particular:

(a) In relation to output 1: (i) obtain subscriptions to scientific publications and databases; (ii) establish, and liaise with, national focal points; (iii) appoint and constitute the pool of experts by confirming the interest of the 600 individuals who served in the pool of experts of the first cycle and by identifying and appointing additional experts; (iv) establish working methods and develop a communications and collaborative document management systems; (v) prepare the draft outline of the assessment; (vi) compile recent and ongoing assessments and develop a database for such assessments; and (vii) organize regional workshops to raise awareness and provide information and receive feedback on the first global integrated marine assessment;

[1] The voluntary trust fund for the purpose of supporting the operations of the Regular Process was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/71 of 4 December 2009.

(b) In relation to output II: (i) support the establishment of working methods and the communications and collaborative document management systems; (ii) support the preparation of the outline(s) of the Technical Abstract(s) and the review and approval of the outline(s); (iii) support the preparation of draft technical abstract(s); (iv) review the Technical Abstracts and manage consultant services for formatting, editing, desktop publishing, translating and printing the Technical Abstracts; and (v) prepare for and provide substantive servicing for numerous meetings.

III. Resource requirements

7. Under paragraph 316 of draft resolution A/71/L.26, the Secretary-General would be requested to secure the necessary resources, including the option of the regular budget of the Organization, for the programme of the work period 2017-2020 for the second cycle of the Regular Process.

8. In paragraph 12 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicates that the total estimated costs for the bienniums 2016-2017, 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 would amount to $4,392,200 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; under section 8, Legal affairs; and under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services.

9. The adoption of the draft resolution would give rise to additional requirements, including:

(a) Two new temporary posts, 1 Programme Officer (P-3) and 1 Programme Assistant (General Service (Other level)), which would be required to strengthen the capacity of the Division, including the provision of assistance to support the efficient and effective secretariat services provided by the Division to the Regular Process, including its established institutions. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, in 2015, pursuant to paragraph 322 of its resolution 70/235, the General Assembly had approved two posts: 1 Legal Officer (P-3) to assist the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 and to administer the voluntary trust fund; and 1 Programme Officer (P-4) to manage, supervise and carry out the activities of the secretariat of the Regular Process. The Committee was also informed that 2 additional staff members (1 P-5 and 1 General Service) are providing assistance to the Regular Process and that the staffing of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea comprised 34 posts and positions as at 9 December 2016, including 1 vacant P-3 post. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the post of Programme Assistant (General Service). Considering that two posts in the Professional category were approved in 2015 to help manage the Regular Process and that two additional staff members from the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea are providing assistance for this purpose, the Committee recommends against approval of the Programme Officer (P-3) post. Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly;**

(b) Additional documentation services which would constitute an additional workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management,

of one post-session document (22,500 words) in 2017 and one post-session document (375,000 words) in 2020, to be issued in all six languages;

(c) Operational resources such as for consultants, travel of staff and meeting participants, contractual services and general operating costs relating to the achievement of outputs I and II, outreach and capacity-building under the programme budgets for the three bienniums (A/C.5/71/16, para. 12).

10. The Secretary-General indicates in his statement that the requirements for the biennium 2016-2017 would be $748,100, to be provided through an additional appropriation to be charged against the contingency fund.

IV. Conclusion

11. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly are contained in paragraphs 17 to 20 of the statement of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/71/16). **Subject to its comments and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that should it adopt draft resolution A/71/L.26:**

(a) An additional appropriation of resource requirements in the amount of $604,600 for 2017, comprising $97,900 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, $461,500 under section 8, Legal affairs, and $45,200 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, would arise under the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017;

(b) The General Assembly would be requested to approve the establishment of a temporary General Service (Other Level) post under section 8, Legal affairs;

(c) An amount of $9,900 would be required under section 36, Staff assessment, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

United Nations A/71/686/Corr.1

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Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Oceans and the law of the sea

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/71/L.26

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Corrigendum

Paragraph 11

At the end of the paragraph, *insert*

(d) **The additional appropriation of resource requirements in the amount of $604,600 for 2017 should be charged against the contingency fund.**

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United Nations A/71/687

General Assembly

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Seventy-first session
Agenda items 134 and 20

Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

New Urban Agenda

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/71/L.23

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/71/15) on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/71/L.23 on the New Urban Agenda. The statement was submitted in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. During its consideration of the statement, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarifications, concluding with responses received on 9 December 2016.

2. Under the terms of draft resolution A/71/L.23, the General Assembly would:

(a) Request the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly during its seventy-first session an evidence-based and independent assessment of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The result of the assessment would be a report containing recommendations to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight of UN-Habitat, and in that regard it should analyse:

(i) The normative and operational mandate of UN-Habitat;

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(ii) The governance structure of UN-Habitat for more effective, accountable and transparent decision-making, considering alternatives, including universalization of the membership of its Governing Council;

(iii) The work of UN-Habitat with national, subnational and local governments and with relevant stakeholders in order to tap the full potential of partnerships;

(iv) The financial capability of UN-Habitat (para. 172);

(b) Decide to hold a two-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly, to be convened by the President of the General Assembly during the seventy-first session, to discuss the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN-Habitat in that regard. The meeting would discuss, inter alia, best practices, success stories and the measures contained in the report. A Chair's summary of the meeting would serve as an input to the Second Committee during the seventy-second session for its consideration of the action to be taken, in light of the recommendations contained in the independent assessment, in its annual resolution under the relevant agenda item (para. 173).

II. Resource requirements

3. The Secretary-General indicates that the request would entail additional resource requirements totalling $770,500 in 2017 for the following activities (see A/C.5/71/15, paras. 14-25; and table 2):

(a) Conference documentation services in the amount of $254,300 in 2017, entailing one pre-session document (50,000 words) and one post-session document (8,500 words) in the six official languages;

(b) Non-conference services in the amount of $516,200 in 2017 comprising:

(i) General temporary assistance resources ($81,000) for two General Service (Other level) staff located in New York for six months, from 1 January to 30 June 2017, to provide general administrative support to the high-level panel;

(ii) Consultant fees and travel costs ($141,500) for the services and travel of two consultants for six months each, from 1 January to 30 June 2017, to assist the high-level panel in its work;

(iii) Airfare, daily subsistence allowance and terminal expenses of ad hoc expert groups ($240,400) for the attendance of the eight members of the high-level panel of experts at two meetings in New York and one meeting in Nairobi ($92,200), and attendance of the 18 participants, composed of the members of the high-level panel and stakeholders, at a workshop in Nairobi ($70,200) and for a visit to a UN-Habitat field project ($78,000);

(iv) Contractual (rental of venues and external printing) services ($20,000);

(v) General operating expenses for 2 General Service staff and communication services ($30,200);

(vi) Supplies and materials ($1,000);

(vii) Furniture ($2,100).

4. In paragraph 4 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicates that the requested activities referred to in the draft resolution relate to programme 1, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; programme 12, Human settlements; and programme 25, Management and support services, of the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2016-2017 (para. 4). The additional resource requirements in the amount of $770,500, for 2017, would arise under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management ($254,300); section 15, Human settlements ($500,300); and section 29D, Office of Central Support Services ($15,900), of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (para. 27 and table 3). In paragraph 3 of his statement, the Secretary-General also indicates that with respect to paragraphs 166 to 168 of the annex to draft resolution A/71/L.23, regarding the request of the General Assembly that the Secretary-General report on the progress of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda every four years, the resource implications would be elaborated in an oral statement of the Secretary-General to be issued, as appropriate, in respect of the relevant resolution of the Second Committee.

5. In paragraph 4 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicates that the additional conference and non-conference servicing resources in the amount of $770,500 for 2017 would be required under sections 2, 15 and 29D of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 to implement the additional workload. In his statement, the Secretary-General also indicates that it is not possible to identify activities under the relevant sections of the programme budget that could be terminated, deferred, curtailed or modified during the biennium (para. 28) and that it would therefore be necessary that the requested resources of $770,500 be provided through an additional appropriation representing a charge against the contingency fund for 2016-2017 (para. 29). The Committee received confirmation from the Secretariat that there is no possibility for absorption of the requested resources under the relevant sections of the programme budget.

6. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the requested resource requirements for conference documentation services in the amount of $254,300 that would arise under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management (see para. 3 (a) above).**

7. In paragraph 16 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicates that two General Service (Other level) staff would be located in New York for 6 months, from 1 January to 30 June 2017, for general temporary assistance to support the high-level panel by providing, inter alia, general administrative support and support for the organization of the travel arrangements, meetings and workshops of the high-level panel. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that one staff member would provide general administrative support in respect of travel arrangements, expense reports, and any other financial or operational matters associated with the high-level panel. The second staff member would focus on the preparations of workshops (encompassing renting of venues, technical equipment, list of participants and background documentation) as well as provide any other additional administrative assistance related to the research or activities of the consultants hired to work with the panel. The Committee was also informed that the choice of two General Service staff was also based on the need for a minimal level of redundancy in case of illness or other mitigating circumstances. **The Advisory**

Committee is of the view that one General Service staff position is sufficient to provide the required support, given the short-term nature of the functions required for a total six-month period, the general administrative nature of the support functions required, and the fact that redundancy in the case of illness or other mitigating circumstances should not be an attendant factor in requiring two General Service staff to perform similar functions. The Committee therefore recommends against the establishment of one General Service staff position and recommends the approval of one General Service staff position as general temporary assistance to support the high-level panel of experts. Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly.

8. In paragraphs 17 and 18 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicates that resources for the services and travel of two consultants ($141,500) for six months each, from 1 January to 30 June 2017, to assist the high-level panel in its work would be required to enable the consultants to oversee the compilation of evidence-based cases for the high-level panel, record the panel's conclusions and recommendations and work with the high-level panel to draft its final report. In addition, the consultants would be actively involved in the presentations and facilitation of the panel's meetings and workshops. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the New Urban Agenda calls for an evidence-based and independent assessment of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and that consultants would be needed to help develop the evidence base, enhance the independent nature of the assessment, support the high-level panel in the drafting of its report and facilitate its meetings through the analytical support provided to the panel in focusing its conclusions and recommendations, and prepare concept notes and case analysis for discussion by the panel. The Committee was also informed, upon enquiry, that according to the status of expenditures as of 31 October 2016 under budget section 15 of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, UN-Habitat has an implementation rate of 28 per cent under consultants and experts. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the explanation provided is not comprehensive, as it does not adequately explain the scope and nature of the requirement for the two consultants. In the view of the Committee, the request for additional resources does not seem fully justified at this stage, given the availability of existing resources related to consultants and experts within UN-Habitat (see para. 11 below).**

9. In paragraph 21 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicates that resources for contractual services ($20,000) are required to provide for the high-level panel's meetings and workshops and for the printing of associated materials. The Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that the requirement encompasses the printing of materials relating to concept notes and discussion papers required in the course of the panel's work and cost-recovery for meeting services provided on United Nations premises, as well as extra costs relating to the location of the field workshop, should adequate meeting space not be available. The Committee was also informed upon enquiry that according to the status of expenditures as of 31 October 2016 under section 15 of the programme budget, UN-Habitat has an implementation rate of 22 per cent under contractual services. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the Organization's premises should be used for panel workshops and meetings whenever possible, in order that the incurring of additional expenses for the use of external facilities may be**

avoided. In the view of the Committee, the request for additional resources does not seem fully justified at this stage, given the availability of existing resources related to contractual services within UN-Habitat (see para. 11 below).

10. Resources are requested for travel, as indicated in table 2 of the statement of the Secretary-General (see also A/C.5/71/15, paras. 19 and 20), entailing travel of the eight members of the high-level panel to two meetings in New York and one in Nairobi as well as participation of the 18 participants (8 high-level panel members and 10 stakeholders) in two workshops, one in the field and one in Nairobi. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that it is planned that the second meeting of the high-level panel will be organized in Nairobi in March 2017 so as to enable it to benefit from interviews and discussions with the members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat. The workshop in Nairobi is intended to coincide with the session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, scheduled to be held in May 2017. The Committee welcomes the intention to schedule the holding of the workshop in conjunction with other UN-Habitat-related meetings, with a view to profiting from the expertise of stakeholders, and encourages further efficiencies in this regard. In paragraph 7 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicates that the panel would be composed of members belonging to any of four categories and that two of the members would belong to the category of permanent representative of a State Member to the United Nations in New York. Nevertheless, the Secretariat has requested resources for all travel to New York irrespective of the location of the panel members.

III. Conclusion

11. **Considering that the details provided in the statement of the Secretary-General and upon enquiry are unclear in terms of the resources requested (see paras. 8 and 9 above), the Advisory Committee recommends:**

(a) **That following the reduction of the resources requested for one General Service (Other level) post and its related non-post requirements, a reduction of 15 per cent in the amount of $60,300 should be applied to the remaining proposed resource requirements under section 15 of the programme budget for the biennium;**

(b) **Approval of the remaining proposed resource requirements, amounting to $390,800 under section 15;**

(c) **Approval of the remaining proposed resource requirements, amounting to $8,000 under section 29D;**

(d) **Approval of the requested resources for conference documentation services under section 2 in the amount of $254,300.**

12. **Subject to its above comments and observations, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/71/L.23, an additional appropriation of $254,300 would be required under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; $390,800 under section 15, Human settlements; and $8,000 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, representing a charge against the contingency fund.**

United Nations A/71/688

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Seventy-first session
Agenda items 134 and 63

Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Report of the Human Rights Council

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third sessions and twenty-fourth special session

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions considered an advance version of the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third sessions and twenty-fourth special session (A/71/623), which was submitted in accordance with the procedure approved in part V of General Assembly resolution 63/263 and with Assembly resolution 65/281. During its consideration of the report, the Committee met representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses dated 12 December 2016.

2. On a related matter, the Advisory Committee notes that the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/141" (A/71/218 and Corr.1) and the related report of the Committee (A/71/584) are before the General Assembly for consideration.

Format and presentation

3. The Advisory Committee notes that, following its previous comments and recommendations with regard to the structure and content of the report of the Secretary-General (see A/69/670, para. 3, and A/70/7/Add.28, paras. 2-5), which were endorsed by the General Assembly, improvements have been made to the subsequent reports of the Secretary-General, including, in the most recent report,

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the addition, in a table of contents, of a list of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council for easy reference and, in annex II to the report, information on conference-servicing costs. The Committee has commented that the report of the Secretary-General remains a lengthy document and in this regard notes that the main parts of the English-language versions of the three most recent reports of the Secretary-General (A/69/615, A/70/562 and A/71/623) are 127, 93 and 134 pages in length, respectively.

4. **The Advisory Committee welcomes the continued efforts made to improve the presentation of the report of the Secretary-General. The Committee nonetheless encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts and make further enhancements so as to make the document more reader-friendly, for example by clearly distinguishing between those resolutions for which additional appropriations are required and those for which resources have already been included in the programme budget. In addition, the Committee is of the view that a list of the mandates that have been discontinued or have expired could be included, with clear information on the consequent financial reductions relating to the programme budget (see A/70/7/Add.28, para. 5).**

Financial implications arising from the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council

5. The Advisory Committee was informed that the report of the Secretary-General reflected 73 resolutions and decisions with financial implications adopted during the four sessions of the Human Rights Council, compared with the 57 resolutions and decisions adopted at four sessions by the Council in the equivalent report in 2015 (A/70/562).

6. The programme budget implications arising from the resolutions and decision adopted at the four sessions of the Human Rights Council give rise to total requirements of $49,385,000, comprising the following (see A/71/623, paras. 4-6 and 268-271):

(a) The amount of $23,019,800, which relates to activities of a perennial or recurrent nature and therefore has already been included in the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017;

(b) The requirements of $26,365,200, which are new requirements for:

(i) The biennium 2016-2017 ($20,861,200), including additional appropriations of $14,910,500 (representing a charge against the contingency fund), in addition to an amount of $5,950,700 relating to commitment authorities approved by the Advisory Committee in 2016 under General Assembly resolution 70/250 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses;[1]

(ii) The biennium 2018-2019 ($5,504,000), which would be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium, taking into account any proposed recurring provisions in the biennium 2016-2017 and the delayed impact of the proposed new posts.

[1] The related appropriation in the amount of $5,482,500, taking into account actual expenditure, is being sought in the context of the first performance report of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

Proposed staffing requirements

7. The Secretary-General proposes to establish 11 new posts (1 P-5, 3 P-4 and 7 P-3) as from 1 January 2017 under section 24, Human rights, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, to support the activities mandated by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions 31/34, 32/2, 33/1, 33/14, 33/25 and 33/30 (see A/71/623, para. 272). As detailed in table 79 of the report, the proposed new posts are as follows:

(a) Conversion of six posts (1 P-5, 2 P-4 and 3 P-3) from extrabudgetary funding under resolution 31/34 on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

(b) Four posts (1 P-4 and 3 P-3) for new or expanded mandates under resolutions 32/2, 33/1, 33/14 and 33/25 relating to protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; the right to development; and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

(c) One post (P-3) in support of the existing mandate on arbitrary detention under resolution 33/30.

8. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that a vacancy rate of 50 per cent was consistently applied to all 11 proposed new posts, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/247, as indicated in the report (A/71/623, tables 18, 24, 49, 62, 71 and 76). The Committee was also informed that overexpenditure resulting from any lower actual vacancy rate would be reported in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2016-2017.

9. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of 10 of the 11 new posts proposed by the Secretary-General and against the establishment of the P-3 post under resolution 33/30 (see paras. 10-12 below).**

Resolution 33/30 on arbitrary detention

10. The Secretary-General indicates that, given that the mandate of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention falls under the category of activities considered to be of a perennial nature, provisions in the amount of $2,009,800 have been included under the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. Nevertheless, the additional requirements in the amount of $84,400 for the proposed establishment of a post of Human Rights Officer (P-3) have not been included. Given the perennial nature of the activities of the Working Group, the related requirements would continue to be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 (see A/71/623, paras. 262 and 263).

11. The Advisory Committee asked why a new post was required for an existing mandate and requested information on the related workload statistics. The Committee was informed that the Working Group had experienced an increase in workload since 2015, with some 1,200 annual requests for action (i.e., 100 requests per month). While some of the requests were addressed through the Working Group's regular communications procedure, others arose from urgent appeals, often jointly with other special procedures mandate holders. Nevertheless, the Working

Group had been able to respond to only some 40 per cent of the requests and had thus accumulated a significant backlog. To improve the situation, it had adopted new working methods with a view to streamlining its review process, but this had not proved sufficient to clear the backlog and address new cases at the same time.

12. **The Advisory Committee recognizes the need for additional capacity to deal with the backlog of cases currently before the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. At the same time, however, the Committee is of the view that such support could be provided by staff funded from general temporary assistance, taking into account that the Working Group has also adopted new working methods to streamline its review process. The Committee therefore recommends that the proposed post of Human Rights Officer (P-3) be funded as a position from general temporary assistance for 2017.**

Resolution 33/16 on technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights

13. It is stated that the adoption of resolution 33/16 gives rise to additional one-time requirements in 2017 for the establishment of a team of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Yemen funded from general temporary assistance. The team will consist of 10 members: 6 human rights officers, 1 military adviser, 1 security officer, 1 local translator and 1 administrative assistant. In addition, general temporary assistance funding for one Human Resource Officer (P-3) is required for two months to support the recruitment and onboarding of the staff (see A/71/623, paras. 221 (a) and (f)).

14. The Advisory Committee requested justification for the proposed general temporary assistance funding for a Human Resources Officer (P-3). The Committee was informed that the establishment of the team required the rapid recruitment and onboarding of staff, which would result in a sudden, sharp increase in the workload of the Human Resources Management Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva over a brief period. **Taking into account the existing capacity of the Human Resources Management Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the comparatively small number of staff of the team of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Advisory Committee is not convinced of the requirement for a temporary Human Resource Officer (P-3) and therefore recommends against the provision proposed. The related non-post resources should be reduced accordingly.**

General temporary assistance approved for 2016 under commitment authorities and related requirements for 2017

15. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its consideration of the additional resources arising from Human Rights Council resolutions S-24/1, 31/17, 31/18 and 31/20[2] under commitment authorities (see para. 6 (b) (i) above), it reviewed the related staffing requirements proposed under general temporary assistance and made specific recommendations (see annex).

[2] Resolutions S-24/1, 31/17, 31/18 and 31/20 relate to the human rights situations in Burundi, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and South Sudan, respectively.

16. In this connection, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that, while the allotment and expenditure for 2016 had incorporated the Committee's recommendations and reductions, the amounts proposed for 2017 were based on the official oral statements presented during the adoption of the resolutions by the Human Rights Council. **Given that the Advisory Committee has received no additional justification for the staffing requirements under general temporary assistance for 2017, it considers that its recommendations for the staffing requirements for 2016 should be applied to the related resources for 2017, where applicable. The Committee therefore recommends against the provisions under general temporary assistance for 2017 for: (a) one Deputy Coordinator (P-4) ($46,500) and one Staff Counsellor (P-4) ($15,500) under resolution 31/17 and (b) one Human Rights Officer (P-3) ($38,400) under resolution 31/20 (see annex). This would represent a reduction of $100,400 in the revised estimates proposed by the Secretary-General relating to resolutions 31/17 ($62,000) and 31/20 ($38,400). The related non-post resources should be reduced accordingly.**

Other matters

Proposed requirements relating to resolution 32/30

17. By its resolution 32/30, the Human Rights Council decided to extend, for a final one-year period, until 30 June 2017, the mandate on capacity-building and technical cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire in the field of human rights (see A/71/623, para. 160 (b)). Given that the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enhancement of capacity-building and technical cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire in the field of human rights had been considered to be of a perennial nature, the provisions in the amount of $954,400 had already been included in the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. The proposed resource requirements amount to $903,500, including requirements for the final extension of the mandate of the Independent Expert ($867,700) and new one-time requirements for technical assistance ($35,800). Consequently, an amount of $50,900 would be reduced from the programme budget for the biennium (ibid., paras. 164 and 165 and table 45). The Advisory Committee notes that the reduced amount of $50,900 is only 5.3 per cent of the total biennial provision, when the duration of the mandate has been reduced by six months, or 25 per cent.

18. The Advisory Committee further notes that the proposed resources in the amount of $867,700 for the final extension of the mandate until 30 June 2017 are proportionately higher (90 per cent of the biennial provision of $954,400), excluding the new one-time requirements of $35,800. The Committee requested, but did not receive, a satisfactory explanation for the proposed resource requirements for the final extension of the mandate. **The Advisory Committee therefore expects that more information in this regard will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the revised budget.**

Selection of staff

19. The Advisory Committee received, upon request, the following explanation regarding the establishment of staff posts in support of the special procedures mandate holders, as follows:

(a) When thematic special procedures mandates are established by the Human Right Council, the mandate holders are required to undertake core tasks that are guided by the provisions of General Assembly resolution 60/251 and Council resolutions 5/1 and 5/2, which include monitoring/fact-finding, evaluation, communication and research work in general, together with mandate-specific sets of tasks, all of which are perennial in nature and require dedicated secretariat assistance. The staff requirements for each mandate, as determined from years of experience, include one established Professional post, together with general temporary assistance funding for six months for a Professional staff member and a General Service staff member;

(b) In the same manner, the requirement of four established Professional posts per working group has also been determined necessary in order to provide the required support.

Staff travel

20. The Advisory Committee sought information on the criteria for selecting staff to travel with mandate holders in the discharge of their mandates. It was indicated that mandate holders were supported by dedicated staff members throughout their mandates, who provided a wide range of assistance, including preparing and accompanying mandate holders on country visits and drafting associated visit reports. The staff member supporting a particular mandate holder would thus accompany him or her on official travel. Should he or she be unable to travel, however, another experienced staff member would be considered to replace him or her.

Conference-servicing related costs

21. The Advisory Committee discussed issues relating to conference-servicing costs in its previous report, including the need to have standard unit costs for interpretation and the processing of documentation at the various duty stations (A/70/7/Add.28, paras. 17-22). The Committee notes that such information has been included in the report of the Secretary-General (see para. 3 above). Nevertheless, the Committee also notes that that report contains additional resource requirements relating to conference services, such as requirements for sign language webcasting and sound technicians, which are not always requested in other reports of the Secretary-General where conference services are required.

Sign language webcasting

22. The Advisory Committee notes that provisions of $600 and $1,200 for webcasting and filming and screening are requested in a number of resolutions. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the services were not available in-house and involved the provision of a sign language picture-in-picture live streaming service. The local cost amounted to $600 per day to hire a freelance camera operator, using United Nations Television broadcasting equipment.

23. Upon seeking further clarification, the Advisory Committee was informed that, while resources to cover the costs of only one camera operator ($600 per day) had been requested (under resolution 31/23, for example), the filming and screening cost for a one-day session included one camera operator ($600) and one studio director ($600), which amounted to $1,200 (under resolutions 32/15, 32/16 and 32/23). The

Committee was also informed that, for filming and screening with regard to the sign language interpreters, a studio director was needed to monitor and adjust the mixing of the video signals for picture-in-picture live streaming of the proceedings. **The Advisory Committee considers that the information provided with regard to the requirements for sign language webcasting is not clear and sufficient. The Committee expects that more detailed information will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the revised budget.**

Sound technicians

24. With regard to the proposed requirements for sound technicians and recording services, the Advisory Committee notes that the resource requirements are estimated at $700 (resolutions 31/31, 32/7 and 32/23), $1,400 (resolution 32/9), $2,800 (resolution 32/10) and $10,400 (resolutions 32/4 and 33/4). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, for all the resolutions listed, interpretation was required in the six official languages and thus sound and recording services were needed for those languages. Two technicians were required for each meeting, at a rate of $346 per person per day (a rounded total of $700). The calculation of the requirements of $10,400 was based on three sessions of five days each per year. The Committee was also provided with details, upon its request, of the functions typically performed by sound technicians servicing such meetings.

25. **The Advisory Committee recognizes that the requirements for sound technicians have been included as additional resource requirements in the reports of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates for a number of years; however, given that these requests are not always included in other reports of the Secretary-General where conference services are required, the Committee is of the view that additional details on this matter should be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the revised estimates.**

26. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that, in its review of the resource requirements for subprogramme 4 of section 29F, Administration, Geneva, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, a provision of $1,298,800 under contractual services was requested for conference sound engineers operating and servicing conference-room equipment, in addition to driver contractual services. It was indicated in the supplementary information provided to the Committee that the increase in requirements of $44,500 was the net effect of the additional mandates relating to supporting the Human Rights Council and human rights treaty bodies approved under General Assembly resolutions 68/247, 68/268 and 69/262 ($120,600) for sound engineering services, partially offset by the removal of a non-recurrent provision ($76,100) for the biennium 2014-2015. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, while the final provision for the biennium 2014-2015 had been $880,400 for sound engineers under contractual services for section 29F, a provision of $901,600 had been requested for 2016-2017. The related provision currently amounted to $807,800 for the biennium 2016-2017, reflecting adjustments as a result of recosting, which meant that, in fact, the provision had decreased. **The Advisory Committee will revert to the matter in the context of its review of the proposed programme budget for 2018-2019.**

27. **Furthermore, the Advisory Committee considers that, for the sign language webcasting and sound technicians and recording services, other options for the delivery of the services should be explored, including building in-house capacity. The Committee looks forward to examining these details, based on a comparison and an analysis of resource requirements, in the next report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates resulting from the resolutions and decisions of the Human Rights Council.**

Sign language interpretation

28. The Advisory Committee sought clarification as to the various cost estimates for sign language interpretation given in the report. The Committee was informed that the estimates included the cost of both captioning and one staff member (General Service (Other level)) for printing documents in Braille. The difference in costing in the various resolutions was mainly due to the varying need for captioning services, given that some of the mandates required captioning in English, French and Spanish and others only in English. The Committee was also informed that, thenceforth, and on the basis of past experience of actual sign language service usage, the conference managers intended to streamline the cost estimates for such services and prepare standard cost estimates for all the requests, which would make it easier to review the costing parameters of resolutions with sign language services.

29. **The Advisory Committee looks forward to the Secretariat's reviewing and streamlining the cost parameters for sign language services. The Committee expects that the Secretary-General will present standard cost estimates in his next report on revised estimates resulting from the resolutions and decisions of the Human Rights Council.**

Conclusion

30. The actions required of the General Assembly are set out in paragraphs 273 and 274 of the report of the Secretary-General. **Subject to its comments and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the proposals of the Secretary-General.**

Annex

Proposed general temporary assistance staffing requirements relating to Human Rights Council resolutions initially funded through commitment authorities in 2016

(United States dollars)

	Level	Number of months 2016	Number of months 2017	Advisory committee recommendation for 2017	Requirements 2017 (revised estimate)	Requirements 2017 (based on Advisory Committee recommendation for 2017)	Difference
Resolution 31/17 on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic							
Coordinator	P-5	9	3		54 000	54 000	–
Deputy Coordinator	P-4	7	3	Not recommended	46 500	–	46 500
Chief of Investigations	P-4	9	3		46 500	46 500	–
Legal Adviser	P-4	8	3		46 500	46 500	–
Military Adviser	P-4	9	3		46 500	46 500	–
Political Adviser	P-3	9	3		38 400	38 400	–
Reporting Officer	P-3	8	3		38 400	38 400	–
Media Officer	P-3	8	3		38 400	38 400	–
Human Rights Investigator (11)	P-3	9	3		422 400	422 400	–
Analyst	P-4	9	3		46 500	46 500	–
Analyst	P-3	8	3		38 400	38 400	–
Associate Analyst	P-2	9	3		31 500	31 500	–
Staff Counsellor	P-4	3	1	Not recommended	15 500	–	15 500
Archivist	P-3	–	3		54 500	54 500	–
Administrative Assistant (2 posts)	General Service	9	3		60 000	60 000	–
Subtotal					**1 024 000**	**962 000**	**62 000**
Resolution 31/18 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea							
Legal Adviser	P-4	6	–		–	–	–
Human Rights Officer	P-4	6	–		–	–	–
Administrative Assistant	General Service	6	–	Not recommended	–	–	–
Subtotal					–	–	–
Resolution 31/20 on the situation of human rights in South Sudan							
Human Rights Officer	P-4	7	3		46 500	46 500	–
Human Rights Officer (2)	P-3	7	3	Only one recommended	76 800	38 400	38 400
Administrative Assistant	General Service	7	3		30 000	30 000	–
Subtotal					**153 300**	**114 900**	**38 400**

	Level	Number of months 2016	Number of months 2017*	Advisory Committee recommendation for 2016	Requirements 2017 (revised estimates)	Requirements 2017 based on Advisory Committee recommendation for 2016	Difference
Resolution S-24/1 on preventing the deterioration of the human rights situation in Burundi							
Coordinator	P-5	5	–				
Human Rights Investigator (2)	P-4	4	–				
Human Rights Officer (2)	P-3	4	–				
Security Officer	P-3	4					
Administrative Assistant	General Service	4	–				
Interpreter (local)	National officer	4	–				
Subtotal					–	–	–
Total					**1 177 300**	**1 076 900**	**100 400**